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PROPHETICAL LANDMARKS.

“I am one of those old-fashioned people who believe the doctrine of the Millennium; and that there will be two distinct resurrections of the dead; *first*, of the just, *secondly*, of the unjust; which last resurrection of the reprobate will not commence till a thousand years after the resurrection of the elect. In this glorious interval of one thousand years, Christ, I apprehend, will reign in person over the kingdom of the just.”—*TOPLADY, Works*, vol. iii. p. 470.

“The Revelation teaches (agreeing perfectly with the statements of our Lord and the Apostles) that a period will come in which the Spirit of Jesus Christ should not only prevail in secret, but should also gain the victory externally, and found a kingdom of peace and righteousness upon earth. With the arrival of the reign of peace there will be connected, on the one hand, the appearance of Jesus Christ and a resurrection of many saints; and, on the other, a previous mighty struggle on the part of evil. The principal idea is the perfect return of the supremacy of good, the restoration of the lost Paradise to an earth which has been laid waste by sin.”—*OLSHAUSEN on the Gospels*, vol. i., p. cviii.

# PROPHETICAL LANDMARKS;

CONTAINING

DATA FOR HELPING TO DETERMINE

THE QUESTION OF

CHRIST'S PRE-MILLENNIAL ADVENT.

BY

HORATIUS BONAR, D.D.,

KELSO.

"O my Lord, what shall be the end of these things?"

DAN. xii. 8.

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## PREFACE.

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I DO not mean this volume for a controversial one. It touches, no doubt, upon controverted points, and to that extent must partake of this character. But I have striven to avoid the attitude of disputation as much as possible, and to treat with respect the judgment of brethren in Christ who differ from me.

I have read most of the works written against the system here maintained. They are very few in number. What may be the reason of this, I do not undertake to say. I have not referred to any of them by name, nor quoted their language; but I have endeavoured to state fairly the substance of their arguments.

In reading these, I have been struck with the peculiar method of reasoning which they adopt. Their object is rather to *disprove* our hypothesis than to *prove* their own. They take for granted that if Millenarianism be overthrown, then their system must come in its place as a matter of course, without any further proof. They do not build up nor fortify their

own system so much as they try to overturn that of their opponents. Hence their theory does not stand upon direct *textual* proof from Scripture in its favour, but upon the supposed absence of proof for the opposite.

Assuming that Millennarianism is in its very nature impossible, and therefore not capable of being proved, they endeavour to turn the edge of Millennarian expositions, and to shew that a different sense is *possible*. But surely this is not all that is needed. Millennarianism may have no foundation in Scripture; but still Anti-Millennarianism may be equally baseless. What I desire of our opposing brethren is, that they would produce the *direct positive texts* on which they ground *their* theory; not on which they rest their opposition to our theory, but *on which they build their own*. All the length they have advanced as yet is, that our system is false, and that theirs *may* be true. It remains that they prove from Scripture that theirs *must be* true. They have not done this. But surely, both logically and theologically, their reasoning is at fault till they do so.

Besides, in reference to most of the disputed passages, the ground which they take up appears to me very narrow and insecure. Our position is, that the texts in question *must* be interpreted in a certain way, and do not admit of another sense. We may be wrong in this; but such, at least, is our position. What,

then, is the counter position? Only that they *may* be interpreted differently; that certain doctrines (supposed to be in jeopardy) *demand* a different sense, and that the passages themselves *admit* of it. Now, these passages are the hinges of the whole question. They can have but *one* true meaning; a meaning to be determined not by general inferences from collateral doctrines, but from the examination (textual and contextual) of the words themselves. If, then, we maintain that the principles of sound interpretation *compel* us to adopt the literal view, why do our brethren not take up the opposite position, and say that these same principles *compel* them to adopt another sense? Why do they stop short of this, and merely say that they do not feel constrained to adopt our meaning, for that the passages admit of another? Why do they not oppose their "must be" to our "must be?" If their theory be thoroughly invulnerable, and ours as thoroughly feeble, why do they not venture upon a more positive method of interpretation?

Let me illustrate my meaning by reference to a passage which I have taken up at length in the seventh chapter. I mean 2 Thess. ii. 8. It is one of the most conclusive that has been adduced in the discussion; not only because it is clear and pointed in itself, but because it occurs in a plain epistle, and not in any book of figure or symbol. *Its testimony to a Pre-Millennial Advent appears to me irresistible.* Our

position respecting it is, that, if there be certainty in language, consistency in statement, and coherence in argument, the expression "BRIGHTNESS OF HIS COMING" must refer to the literal Advent. How, then, is this met? Not by shewing that it cannot do so, or by proving that it does not imply this, but simply by trying to shew that the words *may* mean something else. This surely is a very feeble and indirect way of meeting our statements. Nor do I think it the fair method, either logically or scripturally. Respecting such an important passage, something more decided and direct ought to be produced. It should at least be shewn that *our interpretation is wrong*, and not simply that another is *possible*. For what is this but an admission that the *natural* sense of the passage is on our side, and only the *non-natural* on the other? \* And if the natural and probable sense be ours, and only the non-natural and possible be theirs, can we hesitate in deciding which of the two is according to the mind of the Spirit?

The general line of argument adopted by Anti-Millennarians appears to me both unsound and unsafe. They argue that Millennialism is in itself so carnal, so absurd, so inconsistent with other doctrines, that it

\* No Post-Millennialist has attempted to shew that our interpretation of this passage is false, or unlikely, or unnatural. All they assert is, that *another is possible!* And thus they "get over" the difficulty. Would it not be better to *yield* to it?

cannot be believed. Hence they approach Scripture with such a bias, that one can scarcely expect a calm and thorough examination of the passages under discussion. But even though the bias were not so injurious, still the method of procedure is inadmissible. If the question be one purely of Scripture interpretation, then no previous ideas of our own as to the nature of the doctrine ought to be allowed to weigh with us. Our inquiry simply is, What has God written? It is unfair, it is illogical, nay, it is deeply sinful, to come to the consideration of an important doctrine with minds so *pre-occupied with the conviction that it cannot be proved*, that the weighing of evidence is altogether unnecessary. If the case is one of evidence, let us either fairly and scrupulously weigh that evidence, or else decline to enter on it. But let us not undertake to weigh it when we have previously, and upon other grounds, settled the whole question.

It is most unsafe to make *our ideas* of the possible our standard in measuring Scripture. It is clear that, in such a case, we are dictating to God, and not submitting to be taught by Him. I know not a more melancholy instance of this than Dr Bush, of America, in his recent work upon the resurrection. He sets out in the same track which many Anti-Millennarians have adopted, viz., that the doctrine in question is an impossibility. "The physiological fact," he writes, "of the constant change which our bodies are undergoing,

*is irreconcilably at war* with the tenet of the resurrection of our bodies.”\* Commencing by an attempt to prove that resurrection *cannot be*, he then goes on to shew how those passages which speak of it are to be interpreted, so as not to teach it. The replies to his work which we have seen, at once assail him here as most illogical in the arrangement of his argument. They tell him that he is no judge of what is possible or impossible. They admit the difficulties implied in a resurrection, (difficulties far greater than any which Millennarianism contains,) but they leave these in the hands of God. Is anything too hard for Him? They tell him, also, that the object of his book is to reconcile Scripture to a preconceived theory of his own. Such are precisely our answers to Anti-Millennarian works, most of which set out with similar assumptions, and go over nearly the same ground as the American Professor. We say that such a method of reasoning is unsound and untenable; that man is no judge of the possible or the impossible; that difficulties are nought to God; and that nothing can be more dangerous than to attempt to reconcile Scripture to a theory of our own. We see to what lengths this method of arguing has conducted Dr Bush, and we ought to be upon our guard against applying that method to any revealed doctrine whatsoever.

There is another American Professor to whom I

\* P. 390.



would refer, in connexion with some of the above remarks; I mean Moses Stuart, of Andover. He has recently published a very elaborate Commentary on the Apocalypse. In it he is compelled, as a critic, to admit that the first resurrection, spoken of in the twentieth chapter of that book, is a literal one, and that the words do not admit of being spiritualised. But to compensate for this singular admission, he gives us his opinion very freely upon the merits of Millenarianism. He calls it "a gross conception;" an "impossibility," having no "foundation but in the phantasy of the brain." He speaks of "the dreams of men;" "visionaries of ancient and modern times;" "phantasies of lively imaginations;" "enthusiastic visions;" "idle, yea, worse than idle, fancy dreams;" "dreams of phantasies of ancient and modern Millenarians, who make a worldly and sensual kingdom."\* I do not cite these expressions to complain of them, far less to retort them. Neither do I refer to them as

\* See vol. ii. pp. 361, 362, 374, 479, 480. I have been struck with the resemblance to Jerome in these expressions. He is perpetually recurring to the Millennarians, and never fails to bestow some hard epithet upon them; at the same time he acknowledges that very many (*plurima multitudo*) even in his day held that doctrine,—so much so that he tells us that he foresees "the fury which he is likely to raise against himself" in opposing it (*ut præsagâ mente jam cernam quantorum in me rabies concitanda sit*).—JEROME, *Proem to the Sixty-fifth Chapter of Isaiah*. The reference to this passage in Kitto's "Cyclopædia" is inaccurate, and the translation is second-hand; but the article on Millenarianism is good and fair.

evidences of an unbecoming and uncandid spirit in the Andover Professor; of this I leave others to judge. Nor do I feel aggrieved by the epithets bestowed upon Millennarianism; they have not tended to persuade me that I am wrong, nor convinced me that I am an enthusiast or a dreamer. I cannot suppose that they will weigh much with any calm and thoughtful mind. If I can only hold fast, and defend what God has written for the instruction of His Church, I shall not be offended at these reproaches;—reproaches which both in Britain and America are but too common among the assailants of the derided system. The reason I have quoted Professor Stuart is, because his method of dealing with the subject is a specimen of the mode of reasoning which is too much indulged in by Anti-Millennarians. They tell us that our theory is visionary and impossible, and that, therefore, it *cannot* be scriptural. Now, did it not occur to the learned Professor that this is precisely the false position which Unitarians adopt, and which he and his fellow-Trinitarians condemn? No one knows this better than he; and we might well be surprised at his adoption of principles in one case which he would condemn in another. I was struck, too, when I remembered the calm manliness with which he argued the question of the Divinity of Christ against the Unitarians, and could not help wondering why he should speak more kindly to the deniers of his Lord than to his brethren

in Christ. When he was arguing with the former, he stood upon the broad ground of Scripture, refusing to be moved away from this by their oft-repeated charges of impossibility and absurdity. When reasoning with the latter, he both loses sight of his former principles, and leaves behind him his former spirit. He does not meet us calmly, and prove that *his* system is scriptural and *ours* unscriptural; but he *assumes* throughout that Millenarianism is a silly fable, and that, therefore, all texts which seem to favour it *must be* explained away. This, surely, is indefensible; for, however unworthy of his grave notice we may be, yet the peril of admitting such a principle ought to have deterred him from the course he has pursued. Would that he might be persuaded to return to his former position, and take up the present question calmly on the direct scriptural grounds! Of this, however, I have little hope. He has entered upon devious paths, and studied too admiringly the German school. His work on the Apocalypse is, notwithstanding its scholarship, a fearful exhibition of Rationalistic irreverence for the inspired Word of God.

I intended to have devoted a chapter to the history of Millenarianism. This, however, I have since resolved not to undertake. To do it thoroughly, would have occupied more time than I can at present afford; for though there are many sketches of this in various works, of which I might have availed myself, yet most

of these are second-hand ; and having, in the course of reading, noted down many things, both in the fathers and in later divines, I could not have satisfied myself with a brief sketch, and I had not the leisure, nor had I sufficiently digested my materials, to prepare a full history. But the conclusions to which all inquirers upon this subject have come, in reference to the *early* history of the doctrine, is, that *during the three first centuries it prevailed universally*, its only opponents being the Gnostics. This is now an acknowledged historical fact, a fact which we may well ask our opponents to account for, a fact which we believe cannot be accounted for, save upon the supposition that *Chiliasm* was an article of the Apostolic Creed.\* But I do not mean to enter further into its history. And one of my chief reasons is, that I have no wish to prop up the system by human authority, even of the most ancient and universal kind. I would not that our faith should “stand in the wisdom of men, but in

\* “The doctrine of the Millennium, or the reign of saints on earth a thousand years, is now rejected by all Roman Catholics, and by the greatest part of Protestants; and yet it passed among the best of Christians, for 250 years, for a tradition *apostolical*, and as such, is delivered by many fathers of the second and third century, *who speak of it as the tradition of our Lord and His Apostles*, and of all the ancients who lived before them, who tell us the very words in which it was delivered, the scriptures which were then so interpreted, and say that it was held by *all Christians that were exactly orthodox*.”—*Whitby's Treatise on Traditions*. Whitby, it is well known, was a *Post-Millennialist*, so that his testimony is the more striking.

the power of God." If it cannot be unequivocally maintained from Scripture, I will not even attempt to call in human witnesses, however numerous and however venerable. Let it stand or fall by the Word of God alone. Yet it would be well if our opponents, when casting reproach upon us, would remember that some respect is due to the honoured names that have been associated with it from the days of the apostles to our own.

As to the difficulties which are said to adhere to the system, and to render it incapable of proof, let me say a word. Previous to the fulfilment of every prophecy, there have always been difficulties connected with it, by which faith has been proved, and over which unbelief has stumbled. The predictions concerning the first Advent contained an amount of difficulty, perplexity, and apparent impossibility, which completely overshadows everything of that nature in the present case. Man's reasoning with regard to *difficulties* has been thus entirely overthrown. It has been shewn that he is no judge of these, and that when he attempts to estimate them, and to mould God's Word according to them, he is sure to err. We have been made to see how very careful we ought to be in pronouncing upon these, and how unbecoming our position it is, as finite learners, to insist upon weighing a doctrine in the balance of our difficulties, rather than in the balance of the sanctuary. We seem to take for granted that the

*harmony* of Divine truth must be so necessarily and immediately perceptible by us in all its parts, that if there appears to us any dislocation or incoherence we are entitled to strike out the doctrine that seems to introduce the discord, *previous* to any consideration of the amount of scriptural evidence in its favour. Our difficulties are reckoned sufficient to place it beyond the circle of evidence altogether, and to justify us in at once throwing it out of our system upon the internal evidence of its own incongruity. But such a mode of adjusting systems is inadmissible,—especially seeing that all these systems contain in them many things which we cannot reconcile or link together in our present state. Were *this* method of reasoning lawful, the Jews might well have excused themselves in disbelieving the incarnation; and Unitarians might maintain the field successfully against the asserters of the Godhead of the Lord Jesus Christ. Nay, we ourselves should be thoroughly baffled in our attempt to prove the resurrection of the body; for, beyond all question, that doctrine presents to us difficulties altogether insoluble by us, difficulties so formidable that there is absolutely no escape from them, save by a direct appeal to what God has written, and to what God is able also to perform.

Instead of being staggered by the existence of difficulties, ought we not to feel that nothing else could be expected? Had there been none such, should we not



have been inclined to say that the doctrine was of man, not of God? Man may construct a scheme of the future, as a child draws a map of the stars, in which there shall appear no difficulties, no incongruities. But is God's system of the future likely to be as smooth and comprehensible by us? It is a future which is all His own; a future where there are ten thousand movements to adjust, and ten thousand conflicting forces to calculate; a future in which there are new truths to be evolved, and, hence, new links to be formed for knitting the whole together. Surely, then, it is no great demand which God makes upon us, to wait in patience for a little while, and not to prejudge His system, because the links are not visible, and the order not in keeping with our ideas of harmony. The points in which it now appears dark or even disjointed, may be the very parts where there has been most of Divine wisdom expended; and the cause of the seeming difficulty may be the vastness of the truth revealed, so far transcending the lowness and narrowness of human thought. How often does that part of a picture on which the artist has bestowed most pains, and into which he has cast his whole soul, appear a blemish to the unpractised eye? So it is with reference to the things of God; and hence the exceeding danger, not to say irreverence, of testing a doctrine by the difficulties connected with it. These are not for us to decide upon. We are very likely to

pronounce falsely upon these, or to reason improperly from them.

All this is especially true when the system in question is not only occupied with the future, but with that future in a very peculiar way. Let us, for example, assume, for a moment, that the Millennarian hypothesis is true; then, all that it involves is connected with a period *after the coming of Christ*. That coming must, of necessity, introduce many changes,—changes which make any calculation of ours as to the state of things *then*, still more difficult and hopeless. Even were we able to arrange the events and measure the difficulties of a future which was the natural and unbroken continuation of the present, still that would be no reason for our venturing to pronounce upon the difficulties of a system which is not to be developed till after Christ has come and taken into His own hands the reins of government. If our theory refer to the order of things after the Advent, then we are entirely precluded from the consideration of these difficulties. Are we at liberty to affirm, that what may seem difficulties just now, will be so *then*? Are we prepared to maintain that the Advent will introduce nothing new in God's administration of the world, and that what appears to us incongruous now will really be so then? May not what is new in that future order of the world, be the very things which shall adjust all these fancied dislocations, the very

things which were awaiting to fill up that which now appears incomplete,—to knit together that which now seems loose and broken?

There is a remark of Dr Owen on another subject which may very fittingly be quoted here: “A truth, well-established and confirmed, is not to be questioned, much less relinquished, on every entangled sophism, *though it should appear insoluble.*” Were this statement weighed, and carefully applied to the doctrine under discussion, in the same way as sound divines have applied it to other truths, there would have been, if not a total abandonment of position, at least a greater moderation of language, and perhaps some abatement of self-confidence, on the part of those who have entrenched themselves behind certain fancied difficulties, as if they formed a bulwark against Millenarianism, which must prove absolutely impregnable.\*

The present volume consists properly of two parts. The first ten chapters contain what I have called the landmarks of prophecy, and the data for ascertaining the position of the Advent. The remaining five are devoted to an inquiry into the principles of interpreta-

\* There are two classes of “difficulties,”—the direct, or scriptural, and the inferential, or rational. If the objections adduced by our opponents were of the first class, they would be legitimate, even though ultimately overruled by stronger evidence. But almost all of them belong to the second class, being inferences of human reason, which can only be taken up after positive evidence has been disposed of.

tion, with some suggestions as to the predictions regarding Antichrist, and a brief glance at those "signs," which are the outriders of the approaching King, sent forward to warn the world, and to prepare the Church for His speedy Advent. I am aware that the work is far from being complete. I have done little more than set forth a few principles for the more exact exposition of the prophetic Word, and indicate the line of argument which I conceive ought to be pursued in all attempts to determine the position of the Advent. I do not profess to have enumerated, far less to have exhausted, the proofs in favour of the doctrine here advocated. It would require many volumes instead of one, to open up and illustrate what is written in Scripture concerning the coming and the kingdom of the Lord. They greatly err who suppose that our doctrine on these points is based on a few knotty and doubtful texts. The passages on which it rests, and on the strength of which we ask the reader to hesitate before he rejects it, are neither few nor ambiguous. They give forth no uncertain sound, no feeble, no inarticulate utterance. Their testimony is not scanty and infrequent, but full and oft-repeated. No other doctrine can produce a larger, more distinct, and more vigorous testimony in its favour. Many of the truths which we receive as incontestable, are built upon a basis by no means so solid or so broad as this. Its witnesses are very numerous, and worthy of being

listened to. It pervades the whole Word of God, from Genesis to Revelation. It is not confined to the figurative books; it declares itself with equal fulness, in narrative and epistle, as in symbol or type. Like a thread of gold, it runs through the whole web of revelation, crossing and re-crossing it everywhere, and imparting the richest brilliance to the whole texture. It is the burden of all prophecy. It is the summing up, as well as the unravelling of all history. It is the final and grand solution of the mystery of God's dealings with this world of ours. It is the germ of Israel's types. It is woven into all their ordinances, and rites, and festivals. It is the theme of many a psalm; the heart of many a symbol; the subject of many a parable; the end and point of many a promise; the seal set to the "Gospel of the grace of God," as the "Gospel of THE KINGDOM," that is, the good news concerning the open gate for sinners, into that kingdom prepared from the foundation of the world!

It has been the HOPE of the Church through many a starless night, when other hopes had gone out one by one, like beacons shattered by the tempest, leaving her disconsolate and helpless. It is now again, in our day, pressed upon her notice, as her strength in "the hour of temptation, which is coming upon all the world,"—the only light which cannot be quenched, and by which she will be able to steer her perilous course through the gloom of the thickening storm.

It is no dream of carnal enthusiasts, enamoured of materialism, and anticipating a paradise of gross delights. It is the calm belief of spiritual men, resting upon God's sure promise, and looking forward to a kingdom of "righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost." It is no hasty conjecture, no novelty of a feverish age, rashly caught up, without consideration and without evidence. It can produce the testimony of ages in its behalf; and they who have held it in our day, have been men who have studied their Bible on their knees, and have come to their conclusions after long, deliberate, and most solemn investigation. It is no fable of romance; it is sober, scriptural reality, though far beyond what fancy ever painted. It is no vision of the politician; yet it shews us how, ere long, shall be exemplified that which earthly Governments have been vainly striving to realise,—a peaceful and a prosperous world. It is no creation of the intellect; the wisdom of this intellectual age rejects it as foolishness, and rationalism resents it as one of the exploded fancies of unenlightened criticism.\* It

\* Several of the opponents of Rationalism have embraced the doctrine of the Pre-Millennial advent and reign. I have already quoted Olshausen, I may here quote a sentence from Gess. "The dead saints, at the appearance of the Christ, are to be organised again with the material bodies. This is to take place a thousand years before the awakening of the other dead. . . . They are to reside again upon earth, and to live and reign with Christ for a thousand years."—*The Revelation of God in His Word*, pp. 227, 228.



is no popular theory of the many ; there are comparatively few throughout the Churches who receive it,—few who will even concede to it a place among the things which deserve serious study, or are accessible to proof. Yet all are concerned in it ; and it comes abroad proclaiming itself alike to the Church of God and to the heedless multitude, as the consummation towards which the various lines of prophecy are rapidly converging, as the glorious issue of all the confusion, the sin, the change, the death, that have made earth so long a wilderness, as the only cure for those deep and manifold evils under which men are groaning, and which they are so earnestly, yet so vainly, striving to remedy.\*

KELSO, *January* 1847.

\* Having occasionally been called to take up some prophetic points in one of our periodicals, I have not scrupled, in the present volume, to avail myself freely of what I have written.



## PREFACE TO SECOND EDITION.

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IN revising this volume for a second edition, I have refrained from any material alteration. A few verbal changes have been made, and some notes added in different places, chiefly in the way of quotation from writers of note, such as that in p. 124 from Dr Owen, respecting Christ's intercession.

Objections have been taken to some expressions in my preface, as if I had misstated the position and arguments of Post-Millennialists. I am not persuaded that I have done so. I did not mean to assert that they have not gone beyond a "may be" in their *conclusions*; or that they have not come to a "must be" in regard to their *system*. Nor did I mean to suggest that they did not think their position stable, or their arguments conclusive. I merely maintained, and do still maintain, that in order to reach this conclusiveness and certainty, they have to call in the aid of general systems and inferences from systems, and that it is by means of these that they raise their "may be" into a "must be."

Take, as an example, the twentieth chapter of the Revelation. I have no doubt that Post-Millennialists have come to the conclusion, that the prediction there *must* refer to a spiritual, and not to a literal resurrection. But how did they reach this inference? Was it by the simple examination of text and context? No. The examination of these brings them only to this, that the passage *admits* of a figurative interpretation. In order to demonstrate that the words cannot be understood literally, general conclusions from systems and doctrines are brought to bear upon them; so that the “must be” is not educed from the language itself, but from other sources entirely, which are made use of in order to make the prophet speak in a more decided (not to say a different) tone than he seems to do of his own accord.

Or take the prediction in Isaiah xxv. 8, “He will swallow up death in victory.” The words, in their natural sense, distinctly point to the resurrection; and the Apostle Paul quotes them in this sense. So that we have two things determining the literality of the promise,—first, the words themselves,—and secondly, an apostle’s interpretation of them. But, then, if this be admitted, the Pre-Millennial advent and resurrection must be admitted too. In order, therefore, to avoid this, a figurative meaning is sought for these words; and it is maintained that the passage *may* point to a figurative resurrection. Here, again, it is plain that

the natural sense of the passage is the literal one ; but the attempt is made to shew that it may admit of a figurative one ; and then when this "may be" has been proved, it is elevated into a "must be" by means of inferential considerations.

Or take the prediction in Daniel xii. 2, "Many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt." This seems very plainly to refer to the resurrection of the body, like the previous passage from Isaiah. The words themselves are so explicit, that it is difficult to fasten another meaning upon them. A figurative meaning, however, has been found for them. But, then, all that can be said is, that such *may be* the meaning of the words. In order to arrive at the "must be," various collateral inferences, apart from the passage itself, must be made to bear upon them. And is not this just saying, that, but for the danger of Pre-Millennialism, the literal meaning of the prophecy ought to have been adhered to?

Or, lastly, take the expression in the fifth chapter of the Revelation, "We shall reign on the earth." Post-Millennialists think the figurative meaning of these words the only true one. But the question is, How did they arrive at their "must be" here? Not from the words themselves ; for the utmost that can be said of them is, that they may admit of a figurative sense. The "must be" is derived from other quarters, and is

the result of general conclusions from systems and doctrines.

But can this be called a safe and warrantable procedure? Are we not to take the words of Scripture just as we do the words of our Confession of Faith, in their *natural* sense? And is it not wrong to bring in our own inferential difficulties as a reason for preferring the *non-natural* sense? Why should we not do with the words of God just as we do with the words of man? \*

KELSO, *December* 1847.

\* In using the term *Millennarian*, as descriptive of the opinions of those who hold the literal advent and reign, I do not mean to cast reflections upon our opponents, as if they did not believe in a millennium. I merely use the word in the sense in which it has been almost universally used for the last half century, and in which the Fathers used *Chiliasm*. Indeed, both of these words seem to have been originally terms of reproach, (like Methodism,) given by their adversaries, and afterwards finding their way into general use.

## PREFACE TO THIRD EDITION.

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I FEEL glad at being able, through means of this third edition, to renew the testimony of past years, to the prophetic truths contended for in this volume. Each year seems to add fresh confirmation to them, and to bring out more fully the deep Scriptural foundations on which Pre-Millennialism rests.

KELSO, *February* 1860.





## CHAPTER I.

### THE CALL TO PROPHETIC STUDY.

MAN'S thoughts about the future and the unseen are of little worth. They are at best but dreams ; no more than the blind guesses of fancy. They approach no nearer to the truth than do a child's conjectures regarding the history of some distant star, or as to the peopling of space beyond the outskirts of the visible creation.

But the thoughts of God respecting the future are precious above measure. They are truth and certainty, whether they touch upon the far-off or the near, the likely or the unlikely. They are disfigured with no miscalculations, for they are the thoughts of the great Designer regarding His own handiwork. They are the thoughts of an infinite mind ; and they are the thoughts of that mind upon a subject utterly inaccessible to us, yet entirely familiar to Him who sees the end from the beginning, and whose wisdom has prearranged the whole.

These thoughts of God about the future are what we call *prophecy* ; and, in studying prophecy, we are studying the thoughts of God, the purposes of His heart. Of these His secrets, He is not unwilling that

we should be partakers ; nay, He has spread them out before us, He has recorded them for our use ; and deep must be the guilt, as well as incalculable the loss, of those who turn aside from such a study ; who will listen with some interest, perhaps, to *man's* ideas of what is coming to pass upon the earth, but never think of inquiring what is the *mind of God*.

With what breathless interest will a company sometimes gather round a sagacious observer of the times, who has seen much, and noted much of what is passing in the various circles, outer and inner, of this ever-moving world ! How eagerly will they catch up and repeat his opinions as to coming events, though all is conjecture and uncertainty ! But, let a hint be cast in of what God has spoken, how coldly is it received ! As if human uncertainties were better than Divine certainties ; the guesses and dreams of man more worthy of being listened to than the sure revelation of God. When the prophet is man, all men listen ; when the prophet is God, they turn heedlessly away.

Yet that future, with all its vastness of interest and of moment, is *man's* future, we may say, more than God's. It is a future in which all human destinies are wrapt up ; and to discover what that future is to be, is worth the most profound and painful inquiry. If that future be *my* future, and not a future of shadows but of realities, how deeply does it concern me to know whether these are to be the realities of an endless night, or the realities of an everlasting day ? It is not enough that my own individual lot for eternity

be made sure ; so that, in believing the record which God has given of His Son, I know that I shall never die ; I cannot help looking around me upon this miserable world, and asking, What is its future history, its final destiny ? Is it light, or is it darkness ? Is it but a prolongation of its present wretchedness and sin, or is it a restoration to blessedness and glory ? Should it not, then, be with deepest and most thankful joy that we learn that God has drawn aside a slight fold of the curtain, and given us a glance into the long vista of events on which we and our world are so soon to enter ? Should not everything that God has revealed concerning *our* future be welcomed, both for its interest and its certainty ? Should it not be studied and searched, that we may stand and survey that future, somewhat in the position and from the point in which God surveys it, and may in some measure be enabled to enter into His mind respecting it ?

For we are not one, but many ; or, rather, I should say, we are not many, but *one*. We are members of one household, and our household interests should not be absorbed in our individual ones. We belong to one world ; we are the tenants of one star ; and our inquiry should be, not merely, How shall *I* escape from the calamities of which all its inhabitants are the heirs, and wing my way to some brighter orb on which darkness and the curse have never alighted ? but, What is to be the destiny of this my native planet, and of that race which has peopled it for six thousand years ?

All creation lies in ruins. The garden of the Lord

has become a wilderness ; and that which rose up into beauty under the blessing of Jehovah, is now withering away beneath His curse. Its falling leaves, its dying flowers, its clouded skies, its stormy deep, its swollen rivers, its crumbling rocks—all tell us this. These are its weeds of mourning ; these are the groans of its travail and bondage. But what is to be the issue of all this blight, and change, and death ? God alone can inform us ; and He has done so in His prophetic word. The destiny of the earth is written there, and He calls on us to read what He has written concerning it ?

The whole world lieth in wickedness. Righteousness has fled ; and, with righteousness, all peace and order. Kingdoms rise and sink, like the rising and sinking surges of the ocean. There is no stability, no compactness, no coherence, either in themselves, or with each other. Misrule, tumult, and change, are rocking them to and fro ; the reins of government lie broken upon the necks of a hundred nations, either overstrained by the ruler, or cut asunder by the ruled. How is this to end ? Prophecy alone reveals the consummation. Let us welcome so sure a light in this “dark place.”

The Church is rent and feeble, with much of earth, little of heaven about her, to declare her high parentage and destiny. Few in numbers, with persecution as her portion, and sorrow as her heritage below, she passes the time of her sojourning here in fear, breathing an atmosphere altogether uncongenial,—an Israelite in Babylon, hanging her harp upon the willows. Who

shall tell what is to be the end of all this? Who shall foretell the issue of her pilgrimage, and the recompence of her sore oppression? The Lord himself has done it; He has forespoken the things concerning her in the latter day, and she is invited to contemplate these "glorious things."

Israel is an exile, scattered and bleeding, without a city, a temple, a home; she traverses the plains of earth, or dwells in its cities,—yet still an outcast, for whom no man careth, with whom no man will share his honour or his influence, and to whom, in death, no man will build a monument. Her land is a desolation; her vineyards are trodden down; her cities are a ruinous heap. Is it always thus to be? Is there to be no restoration, no rebuilding for her? Has not God recorded "thoughts of peace" for her, in the appointed time? Let us search and see; prophecy alone can tell us.

Antichrist gathers strength. Like a spectre from the abyss, he rises, overshadowing the earth, and going forth to write his name upon the forehead and the hand of his myriad worshippers. "Even now are there many antichrists," *each* of them like a demon from the pit, *all* of them banded together against the saints of the Most High. What is to be the career and what the end of these hosts of darkness, especially of their great head and captain? God has revealed the things concerning him, lest the hearts of His saints should fail. The same word of prophecy makes known his doom; swift and speedy as his exaltation. It is our wisdom

to inquire what has been written concerning him. How shall the Church know her great adversary, and prepare for his onset, if she do not set herself to study the prophetic picture in which God is holding him up to her gaze?

Objections have, however, been taken to the study of the prophetic word, and Satan has done his utmost to give force and colour to them. Fearing for his kingdom, and knowing how mighty a weapon the word of prophecy is against himself and his devices; especially against the great *Antichristian* device in which all his craft and power are concentrated; he has laboured to discredit such studies by connecting them with unsoundness in the faith.

It is certainly to be deplored that error and fanaticism have in some cases accompanied prophetic studies. God has been thereby dishonoured, and His Word profaned. The lips of scoffers have been opened in taunt, while timid believers have kept silence, as if unable to reply.

We need not keep silence. Let us admit the *fact* on which the mockery is founded, and there let it rest. It will humble us; it will inspire caution; it will teach us wisdom; but it will do no more. It will not deter us from such studies, nor will it lead us to impeach the Word of God for consequences in which man alone is the delinquent. It will not lead us to join in the fears of the over-prudent, respecting the perilous nature of these investigations, nor to relinquish the field as either impracticable, or barren, or injurious. Because

visions of futurity, drawn *professedly* from Scripture, have, with unholy fire, kindled some burning fancies into the wildness of a frenzied enthusiasm; because some who have soared to these unearthly heights have flung the past from their memory and the present from their consciousness, living the fervid expectants of a golden futurity, or the frantic denouncers of woes without name or number; are we, therefore, to shut up the prophetic record, and turn away our eyes from pages stamped so broadly with the seal, and encircled so brightly with the blessing of God? Are the prophets to be treated as if belonging to the kindred of the sybils, and their books to be buried out of sight? Nothing more profane has ever been uttered against Scripture, than that the study of any part of it is fitted to unhinge the mind, or raise its temperature beyond the point of calm and solemn inquiry. No Romanist ever promulgated an idea so indefensible as that any region of Scripture is unfruitful or forbidden ground, to be employed merely as a field out of which a casual text may be culled, as taste or fancy may incline; that whole chapters and books of Scripture are wrapt in such studied mystery that the very endeavour to understand them betokens rashness and folly.

“Secret things belong to God,” says an objector. Most certainly; and whosoever insists on prying into God’s secrets will only proclaim his own pride, and plunge himself into profounder ignorance. But prophecy is no secret thing; it is a thing revealed. It is not one of the things over which God has drawn the



veil. It is just the opposite. It is that from which God has *withdrawn* the veil, on purpose that we may know it, and profit by it. The very name of the chief prophetic book is a declaration of this, and a call on us to "come and see." What does *the Apocalypse* or *the Revelation* mean, but the book which reveals, the book which takes the veil or covering from the future, and presents that future to our gaze? Into what is not written we may not search, but into all that is written we may and must. Necessity is laid upon us. Yea, woe is unto us if we turn away our ears from the voice of God speaking to us concerning things to come. We are not, indeed, to be of those who add to the Word of God by their fanciful glosses or Talmudic reveries, yet we are not to be of those who "take from" its truths by refusing to study and interpret what God has set before us.

We hear much of the difference between things essential and things non-essential; but who will undertake to draw the severing line? Or who will venture to affirm that the prophetic portions of the Word are its non-essentials? Do not such truths as the advent, the resurrection, the judgment, form some of the chief scenes of prophecy? And are these non-essentials? Strange, that man should make such a division of the Word of God! Stranger still, that he should make it for the purpose of excusing himself for the neglect of so large and precious a portion of revelation. Is not the fact of its being revealed enough to shew us that God thought it essential; or if not essential absolutely



and with reference to salvation, at least essential relatively and as pertaining to holiness? If a man will persist in calling it non-essential, surely he will not irreverently pronounce it *unimportant*? And if it be admitted to be *important*, then surely all farther argument is at an end. It *must* be studied. We dare not overlook or postpone the duty.

Never did we more require such a light to guide our uncertain steps, and to strengthen our wavering faith, broken down with overflowing iniquity, sick and weary with the long disappointment of hope deferred. Never did futurity wear so wild an aspect, never did God's ways seem so strange and intricate, never were the Church's prospects more perilous and perplexed, or "the world's turn so slippery" as now. Above all, never was there a time when events developed themselves with such rapidity. This seems especially one of the characteristics of the last days. As the world moves onward, it appears to accelerate its speed, and precipitate itself with headlong recklessness and feverish haste. Events, alike the evil and the good, though specially the former, seem to ripen before their season, as if Satan were in haste to carry through his devices, knowing that now he hath but a short time. The crisis comes ere we are well aware of the commencement. Speed, whirlwind speed, is the order of the day. All things are now conducted upon a larger scale, and cast in a more commanding mould. There is less of the commonplace, and more of the startling; less of the gradual movement, and more of the sudden shock and

convulsion in the events of the age—an age which is destined, we believe, to concentrate in its history more of the terrible and the calamitous than has ever heretofore been witnessed, or shall be witnessed hereafter.

What, then, are our prospects? Some would paint them bright, others gloomy. All indeed are full of expectation as to the glory that is yet to brighten over the earth, the peace that is yet to gladden it. But as to what that glory is, how it is to be introduced, and how present events are making way for its arrival, men are divided. The fond idolaters of science and reason are hailing the day of triumph, as if its dawn were already brightening in the east; as if, in the march of intellect, every one might discern the progress of righteousness and truth. Some in the Church, not so unscriptural in their optimism, nor trusting so vainly to human intellect, see the gospel gradually leavening the world, and all things advancing onward resistlessly to their glorious issue. There are others, however, who see the shadows gathering deeper and broader everywhere, and darkness, denser than Egyptian, settling down upon Christendom, and who look for no triumph till there has been a time of trouble such as never was nor shall be.

Which of these opinions is right, *prophecy* alone can inform us. This is our only guide. It is our watch-tower, into which we must betake ourselves, in order, on the one hand, to note the troubled scenes that are passing below, and on the other hand, to watch for every token of the ascending dawn. On

the early morn of jubilee, men were stationed on the eastern hills about Jerusalem, to catch the first gleam of sunshine, silvering the cloud or the mountain-top afar off, that they might announce it to the priests, waiting in the temple, with their silver trumpets, to proclaim it to the expecting city, from which the tidings, caught up by the watchmen of the surrounding hills, were echoed from mountain to mountain till all Judea hailed the welcome note. So are we to take our stand on our prophetic watch-tower, that we may catch the earliest glimpse of approaching glory, and proclaim it over earth as glad tidings of great joy to a groaning creation, and a sorrowing Church. Woe be to us if we keep the world in ignorance of what is coming, so that when the day arrives, it may turn round on us in reproach, and say, "We never heard of all this; they who professed to know it kept silence; no utterance of warning from their lips ever reached our ears."

Viewing the subject even thus generally, we not only find strong reasons urging us to the study of prophecy, but we see also how profitable and how practical that study is. There are many circumstances, however, at present, fitted to call our keenest attention to its predicted scenes, and to invest them with a profounder interest. When the heavens are gathering blackness, and the night is deepening its gloom; when the earth is labouring and convulsed, reeling to and fro like a drunkard, and every thing is out of course; when Infidelity, like some universal

solvent, is dismembering and levelling the national and social systems ; when every thing seems starting from its long-rooted base, as if gravitation itself had given way ; when the Church is sore pressed and straitened, seeing traitors admitted within its camp, and the enemy's ranks augmented by desertions from its own ; when Popery, Infidelity, and Liberalism, firm leagued together in well-pleased confederacy, are maddening against her with infuriated zeal ; when the kings of the earth and the governments of the people are taking counsel against the Lord and His Anointed ;—how intense the interest which the Church ought to feel in the “ sure word of prophecy ! ” how earnestly ought she to take heed to it as to a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawn and the day-star arise !

What, then, is the duty of every saint in an hour of darkness like the present ? Is it to sit idle like the worldling, saying, “ Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die ? ” Is it to sigh with the sentimentalist over the disastrous blight of this world's beauty, the wrecks of its ancestral might and glory ? Is it to lament like the sensualist, because the new wine mourneth and the vine languisheth ; or with the merry-hearted, because all joy is darkened and the mirth of the land is gone ? Is it to scoff with the Infidel, saying, “ Where is the promise of His coming ? ” Is it with the panic-smitten statesman to grow pale with looking after those things that are coming on the earth ? Or is it with a careless Church to say, “ ‘ My Lord delayeth His coming, ’ why should I alarm or vex myself with such distractions ? ”

No. But to give far more earnest heed to the one guiding lamp of Scripture ; and, watching the pallel progress of event and prophecy, to mark the signs of the times, that she may be able to tell each inquirer "what of the night."

We are fallen upon evil days and perilous times. Iniquity abounds, and the love of many is chilled. And shall not this awaken us to watchfulness? Shall it not lead us to trim our lamps and gird up our loins? The storms that during the last half century have burst over the nations, wrecking the goodly fabrics of the olden time, have left us but a few remaining fragments ; and as we stray along the shore in this the dull evening of time, marking their decaying remnants, we are filled with foreboding doubts of the future ; and seeing the heaven still clouded, we cannot help believing that the storm is still unspent. Woe be to us, if it overtake us unawares, and encompass us in a moment with its fury, unsheltered and unprepared !

## CHAPTER II.

### THE USE OF PROPHETIC STUDY.

WE believe that much of the present indifference to prophetic study has arisen from the want of *unity* among Christians. The "communion of saints" is neither known nor prized. It may be admired in theory, but the fellowship itself is little understood. The Churches sit apart, looking coldly, perhaps enviously, on each other. The desire for union, as hitherto expressed, has in it more of the sentimental than the scriptural. We seem to reckon ourselves merely individual possessors of a common faith; not living, sympathetic members of one body.

The result of this has been, that those parts of Scripture only have been studied which, as individuals, we could feed upon, while those portions which address the Church *as a body* have been neglected; and as prophecy especially addresses the Church corporately, not in fragments, its profit has been undervalued, and the study of it slighted. But let us be brought back to concern ourselves about the Church as a body, to shake off this false idea or feeling of isolation, to realise the communion of the saints; then

shall we begin to look about us for some inspired information respecting the character, the condition, the posture, the prospects of the Church. And so it always has come to pass, that, in times of trouble and persecution, when cast off by the world, and drawn together by the sympathies of a common interest, a common suffering, and a common hope, the eye of the Church has been turned to the prophetic page, and from it has gathered that strength and guidance which no other part of Scripture could so fittingly supply. At present, we are too much at ease, resting securely, in league, or at least at truce, with the world. Thus we forget our *common* interests, and think solely of our individual concerns. The prophetic chart is thrown aside; the prophetic lamp is allowed to burn on unheeded. But should a day arrive when the world's slumbering hostility shall awake and burn red against us, when our long dream of peace shall melt away, and darkness overcloud us; then shall we turn with no careless eye to the "more sure word of prophecy," dwelling with deeper delight upon its glowing visions, longing more anxiously for the day of promised rest, praying more fervently for the shortening of the time of tribulation, the coming of the kingdom, and the arrival of the long-expected King.

And as unity in the Church would lead to the study of the prophetic Scriptures, so the study of these Scriptures would lead to still greater unity. Friends who dwell far asunder, with a continent, or perhaps an ocean, between them, have often agreed to gaze each



night upon some bright star of the firmament, and have felt how much this tended to keep awake their warm affection, and to strengthen the tie that bound them to each other's hearts. So the Church of Christ, fixing her eye upon the "bright and morning Star," and keeping before her the hope of the glorious Advent, is strengthening the bonds of love between all her members. The steadfast contemplation of a common hope and a common inheritance, with the mutual converse of united hearts about the expected glory, cannot fail to draw together more closely the divided members of the body.

It has been sometimes strangely said, that such studies are unprofitable, and though some ought to give heed to them, yet Christians in general may find some safer and more useful employment. But prophecy is not designed for the mere gratification of curious men; it is the nourishment of part of our very nature. We should be but half-fed without it. We are by nature as instinctively *prospective* as *retrospective* creatures. Our eye was formed to glance forward with as intense and eager an interest into the uncertainties of the future, as to hold intercourse with past and present realities. We cannot help this. It is instinct. It may often be in a state of diseased extravagance, but still it is our nature. We cannot help our anticipative propensities any more than we can extinguish memory. We are formed to look into the future; and we feel that nothing can be more *natural*; for the sunshine or the shadows of that future are has-



tening on to us apace, and we shall soon be compassed about with them on every side.

Our picture of that future, then, must be filled up either with shadows—phantoms of our own creation—or with the revelations of inspired prophecy. We cannot help speculating and conjecturing, either to “cast the fashion of uncertain evil,” or to spread before us the vision of “scenes surpassing fable.” The past is all fixed and gone; the present may be restless, still it is within our grasp; but futurity is too full of our destinies to allow us to smile at its uncertainties. Every moment comes loaded with fresh arrivals from the unknown shore, compelling us to vigilant forethought; so that fear and hope must be utterly torn from our breast, and the future forbidden to cast forward its shadows, and hang out its portents, ere we can lie down at ease, absorbed in present realities, and torpidly indifferent to all which that future may in a moment let down upon us from its mysterious and inaccessible eminences.

We speak not of the vain curiosity that would fain sink the insipid monotony of present duty in the restless anticipations of change and novelty; but that wise and needful concern about the future which our Lord did not condemn when He said, “Take heed: behold, I have foretold you all things;” which Peter cherished when he said, “Ye have a more sure word of prophecy; to which ye do well to take heed, as to a light shining in a dark place;” and which the Old Testament saints exercised when they “searched what, or what manner

of time, the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow.”

Besides, the soul of man is not so narrow and simple a thing that the belief of one truth can mould it into the form desired. Every part, every principle, every faculty and feeling, must have truths presented to them precisely adapted to their nature and exercise, else they must remain undeveloped, or if developed, remain unsanctified. Our reasoning faculty must be addressed, or it must wither up by remaining uncultivated ; and accordingly there is ample scope in Scripture for its energies to work upon. Our propensity for imitation, observation, and acquisition of experience must be addressed, and it is met by the graphic narratives of Old and New Testament history. Our finer and higher feelings must be touched, and, we have the poetic richness of seer and psalmist to attract and improve them. Our *prospective* propensities must be guided and moulded, or else they will grow rank over fields of their own luxuriant but unhallowed creation ; and the prophetic Word must be spread before us that these cravings may be sanctified. Most mercifully, most marvellously, has God framed His revelation, that, by its largeness and variety, it may compass our whole nature, and adapt itself to every part of our being. We have not to cut down and contract the manifold instincts of our soul, in order to bring it into the likeness of Christ. We have not to strike off one affliction, nor leave one desire to waste unnourished, so fixing our-

selves in a state of unnatural constraint, and concentrating into a single point the various outgoings of our nature ; but, on the contrary, every principle within is provided with a corresponding truth without, by which it may be controlled and purified.

If, then, we are to be wholly sanctified only by a belief of the whole truth, and if every truth neglected be so much injury to our souls, how can we palliate the guilt or slight the danger of those who wilfully neglect one truth of God, one chapter of His revelation ? To overlook any section of the Word of God, is just to say either that we do not desire to be wholly sanctified, wholly cast into the Divine mould, or that that section of the Word is unnecessary for our holiness and transformation. To complain of obscurity in the prophecies is an attempt to palliate our own guilt by fastening blame upon the Scripture. To plead this fancied obscurity as an excuse for omitting their study, is strange obliquity of logic as well as of conscience. It makes the very circumstance which in everything else is deemed the strongest argument for doubling the intensity of thought and appliance, a reason for indifference and pretermission in this. To say that these obscure parts cannot be so profitable as the rest, is to maintain that God has written difficulties in His Book which will not repay the labour of investigation, even when successful. Surely there is no part of revealed truth so unimportant as that we should grudge the toil of searching it out ! And if "the testimony of Jesus be the spirit of prophecy ;" that is, if HE be the theme

and burden of all its visions ; can we count any effort a toil which is put forth to understand that testimony ?

How shall we look for "the blessed hope," if we know not from prophecy what that hope is ? How shall we become pilgrims and strangers here, if we have not made discoveries of the inheritance which is incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away ? How shall we prepare to meet the Bridegroom, if we know not what the prophets have forespoken concerning His arrival, and concerning the signs of His approach ? How shall we put on the bridal dress, if we know not the dress, nor have heard of the marriage-supper of the Lamb ?

The attitude of the Church ought to be one of watchful expectation. "What I say unto you, I say unto all, WATCH !" "When ye see these things come to pass, lift up your heads ; for ye know that your redemption draweth nigh." That expectation and watchfulness must be founded upon and regulated by prophetic truth ; and how, then, is it possible that the Church can maintain her attitude, if she turn away from such a guide ? How can she steer her way amid clouds and billows, if both her chart and her compass be set aside as useless or unintelligible ? The position of the Church, then, must be shifted, and her posture reversed, ere she can withhold her vision from the future ; or else she must be watching for she knows not what ; a something which cannot be the object of any definite, substantial, soul-sustaining hope.

Is she not like some beleaguered fortress, round which stretch, gloomy and far, the hostile encampments of the prince of this world? It is well that she is versant in all the tactics which her perilous post demands. It is well that she has the experience of many a siege to perfect her skill and discipline. Yet of what unspeakable moment to be put in possession of her enemy's schemes and counsels; to know the changeful progress and final issue of the long and exhausting conflict; to calculate upon every movement of the enemy; to understand his well-feigned retreats, ambuscades, and endless stratagems, not merely as practised against each individual in her army, but against herself as a body; to stand upon her watch-towers, marking each distant sign, and, comparing every event with her prophetic chart, to ascertain how near she is approaching the day which is to be the last of her struggles, the first of her triumphs; when the great Deliverer shall arrive, and when, upon the field of victory, she shall ungird the sword, the helmet, and the shield, to exchange them for the palm of conquest, the sceptre of royal dignity and dominion!

Most Christians, we fear, content themselves with very vague and general views of prophecy. They have caught up some of the prominent statements of Scripture regarding the future; such as that there will be a millennium, a resurrection, and a judgment-day; and with these, or very little more, they are satisfied. Here they consider that their prophetic creed ought to terminate. They shrink from all minuter investiga-

tion, condemning it as presumptuous, or at least refusing it as barren speculation.

With regard to such details of the future as we speak of, there are two sorts of inquiries ; inquiries into what God *has* revealed, and inquiries into what God has *not* revealed. As to the latter, I would hand them over freely and without scruple to the unsparing condemnation of all who love the truth. With these the student of prophecy has no concern at all. But so long as our investigations relate to the former only, so long are we in the clear path of duty, from which it is at our peril if we step aside. Nay, the very example of these timid friends refutes their own arguments. They have gone a certain way along the same path ; and all that we want is that they should go a little further ; but still only so far as the road lies open and as God gives light. We would not have them move one step beyond that. They have fixed, certain landmarks of prophecy ; and all we desire is, that they should gather up the information that Scripture gives, in order to fill up the spaces between.

We know how sadly many are fettered with prejudice upon this subject, and haunted with the idea of the presumptuous nature of the study. But the fact of prophecy forming part of the Divine revelation is quite sufficient to satisfy us of the lawfulness, nay, the *duty* of studying even its minutest details. "Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of the prophecy of this book," are the words of encouragement ; and though we had not another such text in Scripture,

that single one would be enough. The prejudice is as irrational as unscriptural; for no one can maintain that the mere futurity of a thing renders it unprofitable, and stamps with the charge of rashness any attempt to investigate it minutely. Yet this is the only conceivable meaning of the objection. And if so, how foolish, how sinful is it, when calmly weighed! For the unlawfulness or unprofitableness of our inquiries into any such subject consists not in the matter being either past, present, or future, but simply in its not being revealed. It would be just as wise to bar all minute search into Scripture history on the ground of its being *past*, as it is to inhibit all minute inquiry into prophecy because it is *future*. The fact of God having revealed so many particulars regarding the future settles the whole question as to the duty of every believer to examine these. It is plain that no investigation, however minute, can be called presumptuous, so long as it restricts itself to what is written; nay, the more minute, the more accurate it is likely to be, and therefore more accordant with the mind of the Spirit. The presumption is all the other way. It is the presumption of closing the ear against the voice of God; the presumption of professing to decide how much of God's Word may be studied with safety, and how much ought to be neglected as mysterious and unprofitable.\*

\* See Isaiah xlv. 11; Matthew xvi. 3, xxiv. 25; Mark xiii. 23; Luke xxiv. 25; 2 Peter i. 19, iii. 17; Rev. i. 3, xix. 10, xxii. 7, 10.



## CHAPTER III.

### THE PURPOSE OF GOD.

! THE purpose of God is SELF-MANIFESTATION. This has been His design from eternity, and it has been shewing itself since the first creating word was spoken. Indeed, of necessity this always must be His purpose, and that just because He is God. It includes within it other purposes; but it is itself the chief and the ultimate, to which all others are pointing, and in which they shall find their completion. Let me explain what I mean.

I take that small seed which the winds are sporting with, and I bury it in the ground. I water it, and watch over it to mark its progress and see what it contains. Ere long it shoots above the soil, putting forth its fresh verdure to the sun. Then, in the progress of time, it strengthens itself and rises upwards, spreading out its branches into a waving tree. In other words, that particle of vital dust which we call seed, has opened itself out, and displayed the amazing treasures which were lying in it undeveloped and unknown. This is *self-manifestation*.

I take that unsightly root which is lying at my feet, and I carefully lodge it in the soil. Soon it springs up and opens out its treasures, disclosing the lily in its



fragrance and beauty. Who could have imagined that hues so bright, and fragrance so rich, had all been wrapt up in that shapeless form? Yet it was so; and the lily, in all its loveliness, was but the unfolded root! This is *self-manifestation*.

These are but poor illustrations of the great truth we set out with announcing. They refer to objects of a lower scale; unconscious and involuntary in all their processes of self-development; yet still they are sufficiently exact to make our meaning known. For that which all creation is doing, according to its creature-laws, for the glory of the Creator, is that very thing which Jehovah is doing in regard to Himself, and for His own glory.

God's purpose, then, is self-manifestation, or self-revelation. It is to bear testimony to His own character. Creation in every form, animate or inanimate, is God's *witness*; the utterance of His mind and heart. His design is not merely to make known *that He is*, but *what He is*; to exhibit Himself the I AM, the Being of beings, in whom all being is wrapped up, and from whom all forms of being spring; to unbosom and reveal Himself fully and perfectly; not partially and in glimpses, but completely and abidingly; by bringing forth into view and making visible all that is glorious, as well as all that is gracious, in the infinite and invisible Godhead. God does not create a world simply because He can do so, and wishes to put forth His power, but because He desires to bring out to view those riches of His own being and character which had

otherwise been hidden. Again, God did not create this earth of ours a fair and happy world at first simply because He loved to see a fair world inhabited by happy creatures, but because, in that beauty and blessedness, His own character was most fully revealed, and His own glory most brightly reflected.

How He did this before man was created we know not, or at least we know but little. It was through the medium of another order of creatures, and in another region than this of ours. Angels were the creatures through whom He manifested Himself ; and it was in heaven that this manifestation was given. They were the eldest-born of creation, and their abode the very palace of the Eternal One. From that centre the first ray of self-manifestation shot forth, and the Invisible and Incomprehensible began to make preparations for making Himself seen and known.

Whether He may be at this moment manifesting Himself by means of other races inhabiting those orbs that, like the dew-drops of the morning, lie scattered over infinite space, as if to catch and reflect at least the *material* glory of heaven ; whether other processes of self-manifestation may be going on in regions far beyond our vision or thought, we know not. He has given us no intimation that any such process is now in action ; nor have we the slightest evidence to prove that *as yet* there are, in these starry regions, races of intelligent creatures existing, or that *as yet* there are any races in existence save those of angels and of men. That such will be the ultimate issue ; that every atom

of creation throughout the universe shall subserve the mighty purpose of Divine self-manifestation, we doubt not; but it would appear that, meanwhile, God is confining His operations to one special region of His dominions, concentrating His thoughts upon one particular process, out of which His one vast, original, all-comprehensive plan of a God-manifesting universe is to be evolved. It is on the soil of this small planet that He is sowing His seed, and raising, as in a nursery, those plants which are yet to clothe a glad universe with their everlasting verdure. It is out of the mountains of this planet that He is hewing the stones with which He is yet to build for Himself a temple in every star of the firmament. It is here that He is constructing the materials, and sketching the design for His palace. It is here that He is weaving and adorning His robes of royal state with materials furnished by this orb. It is of the gold of this earth that He is fashioning a sceptre for the hand, and a crown for the head of Him who is to be Sovereign of the universe. It is from among the lowly dwellers of this narrow region that He is choosing for that King a Bride to share His glory and His love; nay, it is out of this very earth that this King himself is to arise, or rather, we should say, has arisen; for He who is to have dominion hereafter as King of kings and Lord of lords, is an inhabitant of this planet, the native of a Judean village, Jesus of Nazareth, the woman's seed!

But, without entering further on the question as to the existence of other spheres and other processes of

self-manifestation, there can be no doubt that this earth, in the meantime, is the special one. It is here that this process is going on just now, and it is here that preparations are making for larger and brighter scenes of self-manifestation than eye hath yet seen or ear hath heard. God has been carrying on this process step by step for these last six thousand years. The work is still advancing; the plan is not yet consummated; but the rudiments of it lie all before us; the stones of the fabric lie scattered around; and prophecy unfolds to us much regarding the coming consummation, and presents to us in no faint colours the picture of the glorious reality which from the beginning God has had in view, and which shall, ere long, be given to the gaze of the universe, as God's own perfect representation of Himself. For, though storms and darkness must intervene, yet still it is a bright issue to which prophets point, and towards which all things are tending! Beyond that saddening gloom, beyond these dreary wastes, there presents itself, in the prophetic picture, an infinite ocean of unimagined splendour, over whose surface shall be spread out in all their various fulness the perfections of manifested Godhead in everlasting sunshine, for holy beings to gaze upon, and for Jehovah himself to delight in, world without end! Then shall the wilderness and the solitary place be glad; and then shall the "primal eldest curse," which has sterilised the soil and covered every region with its blight, flow back from off earth's surface; the creature shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption, and

this world stand forth again a beautiful creation, more glorious than when it sprang from the fiat of God.

The purpose of self-manifestation develops itself chiefly in connexion with two great events, the first and second advents of Christ. Round these two points all other events cluster. From these two *foci* all light is radiating, and round them all events revolve. It is only by keeping our eye on these that we can understand the mighty scheme, and enter into the mind of God respecting it, giving to each event its proper place, order, connexion, and value. If we either overlook these or choose other centres, we cannot fail to perplex ourselves and misunderstand the scheme. They are *God's* centres; and none which man may fix upon or deem more important can supersede them. They may not be those that man would naturally choose; but still they are those on which God has hung everything; and man can gain nothing but confusion and darkness by rejecting either, or elevating other points to their level.

Such questions as the following naturally occur: To what extent was this manifestation made at creation? What was the exact design of man's fall in connexion with it? How much has been brought out and displayed from the Fall to the first coming of Christ? How much was manifested at that advent? What have been the extent and mode of manifestation from the first to the second advent? What is that second advent to bring to light? What are the events subsequent to it to reveal? These are not queries

of vain curiosity. They are weighty and solemn, demanding the most strenuous and prayerful thought; the most patient and profound study of the Word of God. They are questions pointing totally in a different direction from that which the efforts of philosophy have ever taken, questions which philosophy has never thought of putting, questions which philosophy cannot solve.

Into the investigation of these points I do not mean to enter. They are wide and vast, needing treatises and volumes, not mere pages or chapters, for their elucidation. They may, however, suggest themes for the Bible student, which may lead to a fuller understanding of the mind and ways of God.

The object of the Scriptures is to tell us of God, His character and His doings; and, in declaring these, they introduce man the sinner, making known also his character, his doings, his connexion with God. All the recorded actions of man the sinner bring out his own character in various aspects. All God's actions and words in dealing with man display His character in its manifold aspects. At each step, something new of God is seen. And all the *evil* that has been brought to light in man has only been the means of bringing to light the *good* that is in God. At every point the evil has been met by the good, and overcome. The depths of the former are inconceivable; the resources of the latter, which have been drawn forth to meet these, are still more so, being truly infinite and divine. The history of these past six thousand years

is rich in these deep lessons. It is our wisdom to study them thus.

But the Bible discoveries of God and of the creature do not merely keep pace with the present moment of our history. They go far beyond the present. To say that all the past is full of these displays; to say that each day's events are continuing to develop them more and more, is not to tell the whole truth. God has furnished us with hints as to the future developments which we are to expect, and into the meaning of which we may in some measure enter, though the wide compass of the visions, the glory, and the grace which they are intended to exhibit, can only be fully comprehended by those whose eyes shall look upon them.

We call them hints, for, in truth, they are no more. But they are not conjectures or dreams; they point to "scenes surpassing fable, and yet true." Man, in looking to the past, thinks he has uttered a profound apophthegm in saying that "truth is strange, stranger than fiction;" but the days to come will illustrate this in a way such as we have never yet imagined. God has arrows in His quiver, sharper and more wasteful than those which for so many melancholy ages have been piercing the hearts of the King's enemies; the last still the sharpest and most destructive. He has "bright designs," deep-treasured up in His "unfathomable mines of never-failing skill;" the last still the brightest and most glorious! These prophetic hints are but glimpses of coming splendour; yet what a splendour! What a future do they disclose! What a universe!—



bright all over with the effulgence of manifested Godhead! Perfection everywhere; perfection all the more perfect because coming forth from previous imperfection and ruin!

God has thus not only manifested Himself by telling us what He has done in this world of ours, but by making known what He yet *intends to do*. He has not hidden from us what He designs to accomplish, but, by admitting us into His counsels, has made us more fully know Himself, and see, even now, somewhat of those features of His character which shall yet come into visible development in the ages to come. How much may we learn of God even here, standing afar off, and looking into the distant future, of which we can only have the dim outline presented to us! But how much more shall we learn hereafter, when we shall see these things as they are, and Him as He is!

The history of the past is not written with great minuteness of detail. It did not seem fit to the wisdom of God to do so; neither would this have been practicable or profitable. What is given us in Scripture is not a full narrative, neither is it an abridgment; it is what has been called *selective* history. It is entirely episodical; but then the episodes are of God's own selection. The events and characters singled out, and recorded as worthy of memorial, are such as God saw to be most expressive of His purpose; most fitted to carry out the original design He had in view. God is the selector of these, and He is at the same time the Being for the illustration of whose character these



fragments have been chosen and preserved. Now, what is true of the historical record, is equally so of the prophetic. It is even more strictly selective and episodic; and it is so for the same reasons and upon the same principles as in the former case. It is God himself, the self-manifesting, self-revealing Jehovah, that we also there behold.\*

As both history and prophecy are written upon this principle, we mean that of selection, there is peculiar care required for their right understanding. There are so many chasms everywhere, so many links wanting, that the tracing of a complete and correct outline becomes a matter of extreme difficulty, and calls for minute and patient scrutiny.

There are various plans for connecting these links which God has seen fit to leave thus separate. It is plain that man's reason can help us but little, for it cannot enter into the mind of God: "the world by wisdom knew not God." Nor will the completest theological system carry us over the difficulty; for systems are, at the best, imperfect, and at so many points leave us helpless, running us up at once to the purpose of a sovereign God. Besides, we are too apt to stretch systems beyond their legitimate end, and, instead of bringing *them* into contact with the Word, to be moulded into more accurate and perfect form, we bring the Word into contact with them, that *it* may be interpreted according to their laws; instead

\* See, on some of the above points, the able "Lectures on Prophecy," by the Rev. James Kelly.

of fashioning the human according to the form of the divine, we too often cast the divine into the mould of the human, making texts to bend to systems, instead of systems to texts.

The true way of getting at the connected view of God's purposes, as spread out before us in these prophetic selections, is to keep our eye upon His design, to get hold of His idea. What is it that makes the vast and intricate machinery of the manufactory intelligible? It is being acquainted with its principle and object. The knowledge of God's leading purpose is the real key to all the apparent discordances of His Word. Keeping that purpose before us, we shall be able to see the unity and connexion of events which otherwise seem hopelessly perplexed and corrupt. Man's systems are strait, awkward, angular, sure, in many cases, not exactly to *fit* many texts, if too rigidly applied. But THE IDEA which they contain, in so far as it is really God's, will admit of a much more perfect application, without violence done to any portion of His Word. Even with reference to the past, schemes and systems will often be found at fault; much more in reference to the future. They are often insufficient measuring-rods for Genesis, and much more for Ezekiel or the Apocalypse.

We do not dislike system. Far from it. We count it right and useful. And could we get hold of Jehovah's system, all would be well. In so far as our systems approach to this, they are good and helpful. But then, in so far as they fall aside from it, in so far

as they are dissimilar to it, to that extent they not only obscure our views of it, but prevent our understanding of Scripture, nay, pervert our interpretations. A perfect system would harmonise with every jot and tittle of the Word of God, but an imperfect one will necessarily be found at variance with many portions of it. In proportion as our system approximates towards God's, in that proportion will such dissonances cease, and the whole system be in unison with the whole Word. But unless we are prepared to maintain that our system is complete in every joint and ligature, as well as entirely accurate in the symmetry of its structure, we shall find how perilous it is to set it up as our infallible standard, by which we are to weigh or measure the meaning of each passage, pronouncing interpretations sound or unsound according to their agreement with or opposition to our scheme.

Begin at the lowest in the scale of systems, the Socinian. It fits in to so few passages of Scripture, and is at variance with so many, that its meagreness and unscriptural nature soon become apparent. Whatever man's reason may think of it as a system, still it is at war with such a mass of Scripture that either it or the Bible must give way. The only idea in it that is worth, is that God is ONE. This is what it *professes* to maintain. And the unity of God is a scriptural truth. But there Socinianism halts. That idea will carry us a certain way; but what light does it cast upon those passages which speak of the Son being God, and the Holy Spirit being God? None

There it gives way. And the moment we begin to apply the system to such passages as those alluded to, its lameness is felt. It is palpably and grossly defective.

Ascend a higher level. Take Arminianism. It will fit in to a far wider range of passages than Socinianism, but then it is still at war with many. It has purged itself of the grosser blasphemies of the other, but still it has retained so many imperfections that, when brought into contact with a numerous class of texts, either *it* must be greatly modified, or *they* must be explained away. Its range is too narrow for the infinite compass of Scripture. It has not a little of truth in it; some of its ideas are scriptural: but it is so sadly imperfect in many points, that it gives way when brought to expound Scripture. It is not the mere shape and mould of the system that is defective. That would be of less importance. But some of the ideas which it embodies are inconsistent, not only with special texts, but with God's great pervading idea and purpose, self-manifestation. It fails to express this mighty idea. It stammers grievously and incurably in attempting to utter this grand, original, eternal purpose of the Triune Jehovah.

But rise to a loftier level still. Look at Calvinism. It is, in its connected shape, man's system; yet we believe it to be a system containing and giving utterance to more of the great ideas of the Bible than any other that has ever been chiselled out by the hand of man. In its leading ideas it is divine; in

its formulæ for expressing these, it is human. In the former respect we may call it complete; in the latter we may safely admit its imperfection, an imperfection necessarily arising from man's efforts to express in his own words and develop in his intellectual forms the thoughts and purposes of the eternal Jehovah. With the former, we believe no text will ever really be found at variance; with the latter, not a few, peradventure, may be so found. The former we would carry with us everywhere in our researches into Scripture, assured that thus there will be light shed upon our path; the latter we require to apply more cautiously. For we may with all confidence say, that while no passage of the Bible will be found at strife with Calvinism, some passages may be discovered not perfectly harmonising with Calvinistic formulæ.

There is no system that gives so free and rich an utterance to that grand purpose, that mighty idea of God, self-manifestation, as what is called Calvinism. Every part of it is built upon this, and brings forth this into conspicuous view. And it is just because this system never loses sight of God's great original idea, that it is so useful and so invaluable as our guide to the exposition of the Word of God. Whatever part of Scripture you are seeking to expound; historical, preceptive, doctrinal, or prophetic; take it with you, and you will find the steady, accurate light which it casts even upon hard passages, as well as the satisfactory way in which it furnishes us

with links for connecting together what appears sometimes isolated and disordered.

Prophecy no less than doctrine receives light from this system. The future as well as the past bears its impress in every part. From the beginning to the end of God's workings in His universe, the same principles are acted on, the same idea is developed, the same purpose is unfolding itself—self-manifestation. In the ages to come, God is the same ALL AND IN ALL, and man the same nothing, that they have been in the generations that are past.

## CHAPTER IV.

### THE TWO CENTRES.

IT is in Christ, as we have already said, that Jehovah's purpose of self-manifestation centres. Its origin, its progress, its consummation, are all directly linked with Him. "He is the brightness of the glory of Jehovah, and the express image of his person." He is the WORD—the utterance of Jehovah's mind, the witness of His character, the exponent of His purposes. God-head is in Him represented and revealed.

It is, however, round two great centres that this manifestation is made to revolve. The two Advents of Christ are the two periods, or events, or stages, in which the Divine purpose is specially displayed. And it will be found that as all *historic* truth bears in some way or measure upon the First Advent, so all *prophetic* truth is connected with the Second. The thoughts of God gather themselves round these. For these thoughts, like the orbs which He has lighted up and hung in the firmament, have their centres and their orbits, their revolutions and their periods. Or rather, we should say, that the outer and visible world, with all its movements, and with all the laws which regulate these movements, is but the image of an inner and invisible



world; even as the earthly tabernacle was formed after the pattern of heavenly things, which the Lord shewed to Moses in the Mount.

These two Advents, then, are the two *foci* of that vast ellipse round which all things are revolving. To the Church of Christ at first, these two events seemed but as one undivided event; for she stood at the extreme end of the *axis*, looking along the line. But as she advanced onwards, a distinction became more visible. At length she reached the first of them, and then, beyond it, she saw the second, quite separate from the first; but how far, she could not say. Many events seemed to cluster round; but the order in which they were to occur was somewhat uncertain. But as she travelled onward, and as century after century elapsed, events began to spread themselves out, and to marshal themselves more exactly than before. And as we near the consummation, we may expect yet clearer light, and more accurate insight into the order, as well as the nature, of those mighty events that are coming on the earth, and for which, whatever may be the slumber or intoxication of the world, it becomes the Church of Christ to be fully prepared, lest the "hour of temptation" overtake her unawares.

The events for which the Church is called upon to look are many. The Advent of her Lord towers pre-eminently above all the rest; yet still, in connexion with it, there are other events not a few. There is the resurrection of the just. There are the rise and fall of Antichrist. There are the sore judgments and



fierce wrath which are to overtake the world. There are the restoration and salvation of Israel. There is the conversion of all kindreds and nations. There is the glory of the millennial state. These are some of the events which cluster round the Second Advent: and just as His first coming was specially self-manifestation in *grace*, so His second coming is self-manifestation in *glory*. Both grace and glory are in each of these comings; but in the former grace predominates, in the latter, glory.

Most of the prophecies touch, however briefly, the whole history of the Church. Their chief burden may be some particular part of that history; but they seldom stop there. They generally take in the whole, though giving but a glance at events or objects not directly included in their theme. More or less, we find *all* the prominent parts of God's purpose referred to in every prediction, and the two *centres* invariably come up to view, whatever be the burden of the prophet. To the second of these two centres we find the greatest prominence given; and all predictions run on to it as to their common *terminus*. "It is spoken of by all the holy prophets since the world began." Not that there is vain repetition anywhere; but each seer utters his vision, and closes it with some word or figure, as a link to fasten it on to the consummation, or coming of the Lord. It is no minute Church-history of the future that he is commissioned to deliver, but simply a chapter, a section; oftentimes a mere fragment; yet, however small, it contains something which, while it

shews us that the whole was present to his view, makes known the true place of the particular vision in the series, and reveals its relation to the final crisis towards which everything from the beginning has been pointing, and into which all events are to flow, as the river, with its hundred tributaries, pours itself into the ocean.

Nor is there aught of imperfection about this mode of utterance. It is, in truth, both natural and artistic perfection. Any other method would have rendered these prophetic sketches like Chinese pictures, without perspective and without proportion. But this is according to the exact laws of art, which, in so far as they are true, are copies of nature. Each prophet paints a particular scene or fragment of the mighty landscape. His foreground is always the spot on which he stands,—it may be the wilderness, it may be Babylon, it may be Lebanon, it may be Jerusalem. Then the particular scene he wishes to depict is drawn with minuteness and fulness. Then, in the far background, we have—dim, perhaps, and apparently insignificant, but necessary to the completeness of the scene—the distant hills which circle in the whole prophetic field, on whose well-known summits there rests the calm brightness of that boundless day, on which, when these intermediate scenes of change and storm are past, the Church is to enter, with her Lord, as her inheritance of rest and joy.

The first promise given, ere Adam left Eden, is the briefest, but most comprehensive history of the Church to be found in the whole Bible. The two centres are there; the one predicted as the bruising of Messiah's

heel, the other as the bruising of Satan's head. This promise was, as it were, the fixing of the two centres, round which all after-events were to revolve. It was marking out the two chief eminences from which the history of the world and of the Church might be best surveyed. The second promise, I mean that of Enoch, is exclusive in its reference to the *second* centre. It takes for granted, of course, a long previous state of wickedness on the earth. It assumes, also, the redemption of a remnant, "ten thousand of His saints," or, more literally, "His holy myriads;" but still, the vision is not of the First Advent at all, but of the Second alone. Even when prophesying long before either the first or second comings, and looking along the line, it is rather the terrible glory of the Second Advent that fixes his eye, than the grace of the First.

It would be interesting to note each successive prophecy, as, age after age, it came forth to man; and to mark at what point the seer stood, and which of these two centres is most prominently brought out to view; but this is impossible here. Only a few specimens can be given. Take "the last words of David :"—\*

"David the son of Jesse said,  
 Even the man who was raised up, said,  
 Concerning the Messiah of the God of Jacob,  
 The sweet burden of the Psalms of Israel:  
 The Spirit of Jehovah spake by me,  
 And His word was on my tongue.  
 Spake the God of Israel to me,  
 Spake the rock of Israel!  
 There shall rule over men a Just One,

\* 2 Samuel xxiii. 1.

He shall rule in the fear of God.  
 And as the light of morning shall He arise,  
 The sun of an unclouded morning,  
 Shining after rain upon the tender grass of the earth.  
 Though my house be not perfect with God,  
 Yet an everlasting covenant has He made with me,  
 Ordered for all time and sure.  
 Surely it is all my salvation and all my desire!  
 But the sons of Belial shall not grow,  
 As thorns to be cast out are they all;  
 Though not by the hand shall they be taken,  
 But the man touching them shall be wounded as with iron and  
 the shaft of a spear,  
 And with fire shall they be utterly consumed upon the spot."

This is a vision of the Second Advent, yet commencing with, though touching slightly upon, the First, when referring to the "Anointed of the God of Jacob." Then the Righteous King is set before us, with all the blessings of His beneficent reign—a reign established upon the destruction of Antichrist and his hosts.

Or take a Psalm, the sixty-seventh, the prayer of the Jewish Church, the same as that of the Bride,  
 "Make haste, my beloved:"—

"God be merciful to us and bless us,  
 Cause his face shine on us."

And what shall be the effect of such blessings to Israel? It shall be knowledge and salvation to the Gentiles; "for Israel shall blossom and bud, and fill the face of the world with fruit:"—

"That thy way may be known upon the earth,  
 Thy saving health among all nations."

The prayer then proceeds with still greater enlargement and fervent urgency:—

“Let the people praise thee, O God;  
Let all the people praise thee;  
O let the nations be glad and sing for joy.”

Why all this gladness and exultation throughout the earth? Because now misgovernment and oppression are at an end. The Righteous King has come, the true Melchizedek, and all the earth rejoices under His just and peaceful sway:—

“For thou shalt judge the people righteously,  
And govern the nations upon the earth.”

Again the prayer ascends; or rather, I should say, there is heard a loud summoning of the nations to lift up the voice of praise:—

“Let the people praise thee, O God;  
Let all the people praise thee.”

And why this redoubled call for gladness? Why this loud summons to the nations to unite in praise? Because all things have been made new. The curse has been removed and fertility restored:—

“The earth shall yield her increase,  
God, our own God, shall bless us;  
God shall bless us,  
And all the ends of the earth shall fear him.”

In all this it is more especially the second coming of the Lord on which the Church has her eye fixed. It is round the second of the two centres that she sees these glorious events revolving.

Or let us take the eighty-second Psalm, a psalm which singles out a particular scene or class of objects and dwells on them. The objects are not in themselves directly connected with either of the Advents;

but the seer, in his closing words, links them on to the *Second*, and there the curtain falls. It is the misgovernment of the earth during the absence of its true King that is the psalmist's theme. They who have been intrusted with kingly power are seen utterly perverting it, and employing it only for oppression and selfishness. God interposes. He summons the potentates of the earth, who are here called by the name of "the mighty," and "gods:"—

"God standeth in the assembly of the mighty,  
He judgeth among the gods."

Princes are here called "gods," especially the Jewish rulers, on whom God bestowed the name, as one of peculiar honour. And when they are thus gathered round Him, He expostulates:—

"How long will ye judge unjustly  
And accept the persons of the wicked?  
Defend the poor and fatherless,  
Do justice to the afflicted and needy.  
Deliver the poor and needy,  
Rid them out of the hand of the wicked."

But expostulation is vain. They refuse to hear the voice of God. They persist in their tyranny and wickedness:—

"They know not, neither will they understand,  
They walk on in darkness."

And what are the effects of this mismanagement and injustice? Just what might have been expected. Disorder fills the earth. Everything is shaken and upturned:—

"All the foundations of the earth are out of course."

Nothing remains, then, but that God should interpose. He must judge and avenge the cause of the oppressed. He must cast down and sweep away those whom He had raised up and honoured :—

“ I have said, Ye are gods,  
And all of you children of the Most High;  
But ye shall die like men,  
And fall like one of the princes.”

Though He himself dignified them with such a title, giving them His own name, yet He would not spare them. They shall die the common death of men, and fall like any of the princes of the heathen to whom no such name of honour had been given. Having pronounced their sentence, there is a pause. God stands silent. The whole assembly is dumb. Then the voice of His saints is heard appealing to Himself, calling upon Him to take to Himself His great power and reign :—

“ Arise, O God, judge (or, rule over) the earth,  
For THOU shalt inherit all nations.”

And thus the closing words connect the scene with the second coming of the Lord, shewing how all present misgovernment is to end in that day when God shall cast down the wicked from their throne, and Himself assume the seat of royal power.

It is to be feared that prophecy has too often not been studied with reference to these centres. Yet they are God's centres. They are the two leading points to which the Lord directed the eye of His disciples when He said, “Ought not Christ to have



suffered these things, and to enter into his glory?" and in which the Apostle Peter sums up all prophecy, "The sufferings of Christ and the glory which should follow." And our right understanding of the prophetic Word will be in proportion as we keep these in view, and arrange events according to their connexion with the one or the other. Neglect of this has led to much confusion; and there has been sad entanglement of passages and predictions, as well as dislocation of scenes and misarrangement of times. Associations have been formed which are not easily undone; ideas have been connected with words and figures, which are not to be corrected in a day; the past and the future have been carelessly mixed up together. This want of classification and system has been a grievous hindrance, a hindrance which only of late years has been begun to be recognised and provided against. While science was classifying and arranging its facts, making thereby prodigious strides, Biblical study has overlooked this secret of true progress and solid exposition. The treasures of gold and gems which cover the prophetic page have been allowed to remain in bright disorder; admired, but not arranged; examined, but imperfectly classified.

So long as prophecy is perused in this spirit of incurious indolence; so long as it is looked upon as a field of nearly uniform sameness throughout, so long will its real riches remain unknown. To the vigilant, accurate eye, that can arrange as well as appreciate its stores, it will appear bright with an endless yet well-ordered variety. Viewed thus, it spreads out before



us, like a broad, well-watered plain, various yet regular, profusely wild, it may be, yet not disorderly in its beauty. Viewed in the drowsy fashion we have referred to, it stretches out into an untamed wilderness—a mere chaos of verdure. Not more diverse do the heavens appear to the practised eye of the astronomer and to the ignorant gaze of the peasant, than does the starry firmament of prophecy, with which Jehovah has overcanopied His Church in this dark midnight of the world, appear to the thoughtful, classifying expositor, and to the indolent glance of the prejudiced or the careless reader. The midnight arch of heaven appears to the ignorant gazer nothing but an azure roof inlaid with stars of various lustre—a wilderness of bright disorder—a chaos of orbs flung together by chance, and coursing to and fro without path or law; while to the skilful eye of science it stands forth as a fair array of God's well-marshalled hosts, each star poised upon its own centre, pursuing its own orbit, and fulfilling its appointed times. So is it with prophecy. To hasty, superficial readers, there appears much that is beautiful in the inspired records of futurity, but that is all. For more than this they think not of searching. The general reflection from its surface is all that they see, and with it they are contented. To those, on the other hand, who, believing that such a method of reading prophecy is irreverence and presumption, have sought to bestow upon it, as upon all parts of God's Word, no less care and thought than upon the most condensed geometrical demonstration, or the most

intricate algebraical process—to them the page of prophecy unfolds itself into a series of minute but most orderly details, and presents a surface infinitely diversified, yet bearing every where the marks of perfect regularity and exact design.

## CHAPTER V.

### THE INTERVAL.

THE two centres being recognised, the question occurs, What is written concerning the *interval* between?

This interval is called in Scripture the "last time," or the "last days." It began with the first coming of the Lord, as is evident from the words of Peter, when he quotes Joel's prophecy concerning the last days, and applies it to his own time; and as is also evident from the words of the Apostle John, "Little children, it is the last time." Thus, then, we learn its commencement. I do not mean as to precise date of day or year, but in a wider, though still definite sense. We can at least say this—the last days *had begun* in the time of the apostles.

But when do they end? Here also we have inspired testimony. The Apostle Peter, in the third chapter of his Second Epistle, points out their termination, and tells us that they end in the second coming of the Lord. I need not cite the verses at length. The perusal of that chapter will satisfy any reader as to this statement.

Thus, then, we have discovered both the beginning and the end of the interval, an interval often alluded

to by the apostles. We see that the period called "the last days" begins with the First and ends with the Second Advent. How far on the Church may now be in this period,—how near the close of the interval, is not the object of our inquiry. A most interesting one it is, no doubt,—no mere curious question, but an intensely solemnising one,—yet it is not ours at present; so we pass it by, remarking merely that it is the longest period of the kind that the Church has yet enjoyed, and, with eighteen centuries behind us, we may be looking out for some signs of its close.

But what is the nature of this interval? What purpose is it designed to serve? It is called "the acceptable year of the Lord." It is "the accepted time," the time in which God is sending forth His messages of peace, making known the method of a free acceptance. It is "the day of salvation,"—the day in which God is presenting salvation to the sinner through Him who came to seek and to save that which is lost. It is the era of grace. God is now bearing testimony to His own gracious character, that men, believing that testimony, may turn to Him and live. Yet in spite of the gracious nature and design of this period, "there are few that be saved." "Many are called, but few are chosen." The world is not converted; nor does God ever speak of its being converted before the coming of His Son from heaven, at the "times of the restitution of all things." The dispensation is, then, emphatically one of *election*,—a "choosing of men out of the world,"—a "taking out of the Gentiles a people for His name."

And the eighteen centuries that have gone by have borne decided enough witness to this truth. They have fully interpreted the design of the interval, and illustrated most clearly the meaning of such expressions as "the remnant," "the election," "the little flock."

But, further, we inquire what is the *character* of this interval? Is it good or evil; bright or dark? Scripture answers, Evil, not good; dark, not bright.

1. *With reference to Israel, it is evil, it is dark.* "Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled;" and then, to shew that these times and this down-treading were not to end till the Lord should come, it is immediately added, "And there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; . . . . And then shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud, with power and great glory."\* Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel, are full of predictions regarding Israel's long and sore calamity; a calamity which, though it may be said to have commenced at their first captivity, yet did not descend upon them in full measure till after the sack and rasure of Jerusalem, when they went into total dispersion and exile among the nations. Daniel thus describes the termination of their woes:—"At that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince that standeth up for the children of thy people (Israel); and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time: and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one

\* Luke xxi. 24-27.

that shall be found written in the book.”\* And, to prevent doubt as to the time when Israel’s sorrows were thus gloriously to end, it is added, “Many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake,”—shewing us that it is the morning of the resurrection, and therefore the coming of the Lord.

2. *With reference to the Church, the interval is evil, not good; dark, not bright.* During all this period she is a little flock,—a lily among thorns. Her lot is tribulation, persecution, shame, and tears! As an oppressed widow, she cries against her adversary day and night, “How long, O Lord! how long?” Satan rages on every side, seeking to devour her. The world, like a flood, circles her about with its swelling waves. The haters of the Master are haters of the servant too. Nor does time soften the hostility or abate the persecution. The evil increases, the darkness thickens into deeper darkness as the crisis approaches. Satan pours forth his fiercest, fullest rage when the time of his binding draws near. And, besides all these, the absence of the Bridegroom keeps her sad and weary. So long as He is not with her, earth must be a wilderness, even though no enemy threatened, no sorrow wounded, and no tempest wasted her. Nothing but His return can satisfy her.

3. *With reference to the world, the interval is evil, not good; dark, not bright.* “Evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse.” “In the last days perilous times shall come.”† “There shall come in the

\* Daniel xii. 1.

† 2 Tim. iii. 1.

last days scoffers, saying, Where is the promise of His coming?"\* "When the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?"† Besides these passages, there are other considerations equally explicit. In the Apocalypse, all the successive stages of the different visions are from bad to worse. In the seals, the trumpets, the vials, we see this. Wickedness swells on and up like a flood, and each succeeding judgment is heavier and more terrible than its predecessor. I do not now attempt to date the commencement of these visions. But, date them early or late, it matters not. They all end in fiery judgment. They land us by successive stages of wrath and gloom in the coming of the Lord. It is plain, then, that the whole interval up to the Advent is evil for the world. But, again, the Apostle John thus writes, "Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; *whereby we know that it is the last time.*"‡ The mark or characteristic of the last time was to be the prevalence of antichrists. This began to appear in primitive times. It has since become more visible. And, as the time runs on, it is to prevail more widely. Paul tells us that in his day the evil had begun, and that it was to go on working and rising until the Advent; "then shall that wicked one be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume by the spirit of his mouth, and destroy by the brightness of his

\* 2 Peter iii. 3, 4.

† Luke xviii. 8.

‡ 1 John ii. 18.



coming.”\* We may remember, too, that our Lord, when giving the signs of His appearing, makes mention of nothing but wars and rumours of wars, storms and earthquakes, without interval or cessation, *up till the day of His arrival*. Nay, so far were these from subsiding as ages rolled away, they were to grow worse. Iniquity was to abound, and the love of many to wax cold.

4. *With reference to the earth, the interval was to be evil, not good; dark, not bright.* Since the day that the curse came down on account of Adam’s sin, creation has groaned. But its groans deepen and louden as man’s sin and oppression grow heavier. “The whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now.”† This is its ruined condition. But we also know that “the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God.” And we are told *when* this groaning is to cease: it is in “the day of the redemption of the body”—(verse 23,)—that is, the resurrection, which we know is at the coming of the Lord. Creation is thus to continue under the curse till the sons of God are manifested; that is, till they “shine as the sun in the kingdom of their father,”‡ till they rise from the dead and receive their immortal bodies, when the voice of the archangel and the trump of God summon them from their long dwelling in the dust. The earth is to remain under the power of Satan, and oppressed by the curse, until the resurrection and the coming of the Lord.

\* 2 Thess. ii. 8.

† Romans viii. 22.

‡ Matt. xiii. 43.

Thus, then, we have the interval set forth under four different aspects ; with reference to Israel, to the Church, to the world, to the earth or material creation. The state of these four is described as evil, not good ; dark, not bright ; up till the Advent of Christ. There is no hint given respecting any break towards the close,—a thousand years' interruption of the evils,—a period of blessedness, brightness, peace,—before the arrival of Him who comes to deliver Israel, to glorify His Church, to destroy Antichrist, and to renew the face of the earth. If, then, He comes in order to accomplish these things, how is it possible that the millennial rest can be previous to His advent ?

The only way to meet this is by taking up the position, that Israel is delivered a thousand years before He comes ; but then what becomes of Daniel xii. 1 ?—that His Church is to be raised and glorified a thousand years before He comes ; but then what become of 1 Thess. iv. 15 ?—that Antichrist is to be destroyed a thousand years before He comes ; but then what becomes of 2 Thess. ii. 8 ?—that the earth is to be renewed a thousand years before He comes ; but what then becomes of 2 Peter iii. 13 ?—I ask post-millennialists manfully to take up this position, if they can, and to demonstrate it from Scripture. It is not enough that you demolish our theory ; you must demonstrate your own. Merely to negative our doctrine is nought, and cannot satisfy. Grant that you have disposed of all our proofs,—that you have shewn that Scripture *can* be so interpreted as not to testify

in our favour,—is that any demonstration of your theory? What I ask from you is *positive* evidence from Scripture that the millennial kingdom is to be before the Advent. I have endeavoured to establish the opposite *directly from Scripture*. I may be at fault in my evidence; I may have misunderstood the Word. But still such is the *line of proof* I have attempted. May I not ask you to adopt the same? May I not say, you have hitherto contented yourselves too much with merely picking flaws in our evidence; try something more direct and positive. You have asserted that the Millennium is to precede the Advent: bring forth your *positive* demonstrations from Scripture; adduce your *positive* texts. Have you any passages which explicitly and by themselves prove that Christ is not to come till after the Millennium? Quit your mere negative inferential standing, and advance to something more direct, and unequivocally *textual*. Of what avail is it to prove that *we* are wrong, if you do not prove that *you* are right?

But let your proofs be *bonâ fide* scriptural ones. It is vain to say to us, there are such difficulties in your system that we are compelled to pronounce it unscriptural. For what is that but setting up your own judgment as the standard of doctrine? What is it but saying, that however plainly the doctrine had been revealed, you could not have believed it? It is equally vain to say there are fewer difficulties in the post-millennial system. Granting that such is the case, is not that a poor reason for believing it? You think

there are fewest difficulties in your system, and *therefore* you receive it! Is this simple-hearted faith? What would Abraham have said to this? What would aged Simeon have said to it, when he clasped a helpless infant in his arms and worshipped it as God? But, besides, I think that your system has many more difficulties than ours, and these far more serious and insuperable. The obstacles that stand in our way are the objections of human reason, which calls every thing a difficulty which it cannot grasp. The difficulties in your way are *the plain words of God*. To drive through these is a more arduous task than to surmount all the objections of reason or education or prejudice. You have two things to do: you have first to shew that these plain words of God which we adduce are not against you; and you have, secondly, *to shew that there are words equally plain and full on your side*. You have often attempted the former; *but the latter you have left unattempted*.

I have pointed out four separate lines of events, each one of which preserves throughout the same character of evil, evil augmenting, not diminishing with their progress. These four terminate in the Advent. They maintain the evil until Christ at His coming removes and reverses it. The point and force of this demonstration it is not difficult to comprehend and appreciate. I may, however, illustrate it. Four vessels left the harbour to proceed upon a long and adventurous voyage. One who knew the seas they were to traverse, who could truly foresee both the weather and the course,

from the outset to the landing, gave instructions to each of their crews. He told them that the voyage would be an important one, though how long He said not. He told them that the way was perilous throughout. He especially told them that from the beginning to the end of their ocean-journey they would be swept over by the breaking tempest ; a tempest which would continue without cessation, and would rage with fiercest fury just towards the close of their course. He told them, moreover, that there were no peaceful islands out at sea, where they might repose from the rage of the driving hurricane. They must proceed right onward, till the Son of the Sovereign of the realm they were bound for should meet them, just as they were about to be utterly sunk and broken. *He* would say to the winds, "Peace, be still !" and there would be a great calm ; *He* would bring them to their desired haven. What should we think if the crew or the passengers, still more if the captain, were to maintain that the latter half of their voyage was to be calm and prosperous,—that when they had reached within a thousand miles of their destination the storm was entirely to cease, and they were to linger and rest in certain "islands of the blest," at which they would then arrive ? The storm was not to cease till the King's Son came to hush it ; and how could they imagine that they were to have a calm, bright sail of a thousand miles before they came within sight of the kingdom or saw the Prince ?

But what is the object of the interval ?

1. To shew what sin really is, how hateful, how malignant, how terrible. Had the scene closed up at the First Advent, or shortly after, how little would have been known of its horrid blackness! But we have seen that there is no extremity to which sin will not proceed. It aims at nothing less than the dethronement, or rather the annihilation of Jehovah. This has been amply proved already. It is to be more fully and fearfully proved in the last mighty crisis and conflict of evil.

2. To shew the nature and extent of human wickedness. Man's heart is laid bare before us, and exhibited in ten thousand different hues and aspects. What streams of hellish pollution have burst forth from that one source, a human heart! What hatred of God, what enmity both to His law and to His love, what infinite abominations! Law and love, threatening and tenderness, have availed nothing to check it. The streams are flowing darker than ever, and with a still broader current. Man sinned in Eden. He continued to sin after the penalty had been inflicted for this transgression. He sinned with the warning of the Flood before him, and he sinned with the terrible remembrance of that Flood behind him. He sinned in view of Sodom and Gomorrah's smoking sepulchres. He sinned under the awful shadow of Sinai. He sinned with the tabernacle of God in the midst, and the bright cloud of glory overstretching him. He sinned in spite of prophets and seers coming straight to him with messages from Jehovah on their lips. He

sinned with an incarnate God dwelling beside him : nay, he hated that Divine Saviour, and rested not till he slew Him. He has been sinning with the same desperate deliberation during these ages past. He is seeking out new ways of sin, and new forms of insulting and dishonouring God, as if his hatred of Jehovah could never be slaked. And the last outburst of it in the form of Antichrist is to be the embodiment and concentration of all human wickedness from the day of Cain. Such is the exhibition of a human heart that has been made ! There is a still more awful manifestation of it yet in reserve at the close of the millennial period. And it will then be seen that even in the visible presence of God and of His glory, man will rush into rebellion !

3. To shew Satanic power and wickedness. Sin is not a thing confined to one order of creatures. In Satan and his angels we have a manifestation of malignity, revenge, rebellion, as dark as man's, with this only palliation, that it is not against love such as man has tasted. Very fearful has been the power of Satan, both in the Church and world hitherto, in every age. But the most fearful display of it is reserved for the great Antichristian apostasy, which he is to lead on and energe in the last time, immediately before he is bound.

4. To bring out the gracious character of Jehovah. What long-suffering has His been ! Infinite, unutterable ! Many waters have not quenched, nor have the floods drowned it. It has been slighted, denied, rejected, yet it wearies not ; and it is long, very long,



before it gives way, and is exchanged for wrath. There lives not on earth the sinner which it is not longing to bless. There is not one soul upon the surface of this many-peopled soil over which it does not yearn with tenderness unutterable. Had it not been for this long interval of sin, how little we should have known of the infinite heart of God, how little of the heights and depths of love that it contains !

5. To gather in a people to Christ. It is now that the members of Christ's body are preparing. It is now that the Father is making ready a Bride for His Son out of the sinners of this fallen earth. And what honour for us to be of those who are thus to share His affection and His throne, to sit down with Him at His marriage-supper, in the day of the gladness of His heart !

Such, then, are some of the objects which Jehovah has in view during this interval. They are not only important in themselves, but fitted strongly to enforce our whole argument throughout this chapter. For are not these objects totally inconsistent with the idea of a millennium of holiness *before the Advent* ? If the great feature and characteristic of the interval be ANTI-CHRISTIANITY ; if this began in the days of the apostles ; if this is to " wax worse and worse " as time moves downward,—then how is it possible that there can be a millennium of holy blessedness before its close ?

## CHAPTER VI.

### THE ADVENT.

WHAT a trial the departure of Jesus must have been to His disciples! His absence was a bitter blank in their circle. How they would miss Him! He knew this, and prepared them for it. Love like theirs could ill bear the absence of one so dear. No wonder that they delighted in the prospect of His return, and clasped the promise of it to their heart, as their treasure and their joy. "I will see you again," was the solace of their souls. They knew that He loved them though absent; they were made to taste the refreshment of His spiritual presence; their inward fellowship with Him was unbroken, yet to see Him again face to face was what they desired. Without this they could not be satisfied.

What a trial also must His departure have been to the family that He loved at Bethany! How often had He been their guest! How often had He sat at their table, and slept beneath their roof! How often had they watched Him in the still evening, coming over the brow of Olivet, and slowly descending its shady slopes! How eagerly they had gone forth to meet Him, and to welcome Him to their quiet dwelling, where no city

hum could meet His ear, and nought be heard around, save the breath of the breeze as it murmured through the palms! What a blank, then, would His absence be! How empty, how desolate would their dwellings now appear! Their loved friend and guest had gone, and left behind Him a vacancy which none but Himself could ever fill. They could not doubt His love; they had His abiding though unseen fellowship; but *He*, the living Jesus,—He, the visible companion, was away. How they would mourn! How eagerly they would cling to the promise of His speedy return! It would be to them truly a “blessed hope.”

Such should be the feelings of the Church, such should be the longings of every saint. The Bridegroom is absent, and should not the friends of the Bridegroom mourn? Above all, should not the Bride lament His absence? Should she not watch without ceasing, for the return of the beloved of her heart? Until He appear, she cannot be comforted. She must feel the dreary blank. No glory, no prosperity to which she may attain, can satisfy her without His personal presence. A Millennium, without Him in the midst, would be poor indeed. And besides, it is on His *return* that God wishes her to fix her eye. It is around His return that all her hopes revolve. It is *in* his return that all the glory she has been promised is wrapt up. It is *then* that the marriage is to take place, for this is but the time of her betrothment. It is then that she is to receive from His own hands the crown of royal dominion, and be invested with the rule

of the universe as His queen. Till then, sorrow and tribulation are her lot below.

Some wish to brand all this as carnal. But what do they mean by carnal? Is it sinful, fleshly, corrupt? Do they mean this? Then I answer it is not carnal; it is holy, it is spiritual. If by carnal, they mean human, natural, I admit it. It is human, it is natural. God meant it so to be. This was one of the ends for which the Word was made flesh, that God might present Himself to us in visible form, so that we might have fellowship according to our nature. It was the God who made us that gave us these longings for visible, palpable intercourse, this delight in hearing, seeing, handling each other. Without these our nature cannot be satisfied. And just that we might be satisfied, He sent us His Son, in the likeness of an elder brother, bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh, to meet those natural and God-given cravings of our souls. It is upon this principle of our nature, holy love, and holy desire for personal intercourse with Him we love, that our grief for the absence of the Lord, and our desire for His return, are founded. They are not, then, carnal; they are spiritual, they are holy.

Our union with Christ by faith necessarily leads us to desire closer and more sensible union. Faith can do much, but still it cannot do all; it is not sight; and the stronger it becomes, the more does it excite within us the desire for sight. To know that I am His and that He is mine, and yet not to long to behold and embrace Him, is strange inconsistency, nay, it is un-

disguised coldness and estrangement. And to make His *spiritual* presence a reason for not desiring His *actual* presence, is to turn a blessed privilege into an excuse for unbelief and unfaithfulness. Was it not the beloved disciple,—he who enjoyed most of His spiritual presence,—he who was most favoured with visions and revelations of the Lord, that has left behind him as the closing words of inspiration, so earnest an expression of his longing for the coming of the Lord? The well-known voice, addressing him amid the rocks of Patmos, had no sooner said, “Surely I come quickly,” than the full heart of the apostle joyfully responded, “Even so, come, Lord Jesus.” Each year that passes over us says, “Surely I come quickly.” Each prophetic sign now proclaiming itself, in heaven or on earth, each convulsion, each famine, each calamity, each rumour of war, says, “Surely I come quickly.” Every event in these last days gives utterance to the same note of promise and of warning. Do *we*, then, respond with joyful hearts, “Even so, come, Lord Jesus?”

The Lord likens Himself to “a certain nobleman” who went into a far country “to receive for himself a kingdom and to return.” He is now in that far country, and has been sojourning there these eighteen hundred years. But He is not always to remain there: He is to return, having received the kingdom. Before He left, He gave many intimations regarding His return. His instructions were minute and special, implying the great stress He laid upon it, and His anxiety that His Church should at all times be fully prepared for it,

however sudden it might be. He always spoke of its time as a profound uncertainty, but of the event itself as most absolutely certain, and most abruptly unexpected, overtaking men "as a snare," stealing in upon them with silent foot, as "a thief in the night." He intimated, moreover, that it was not far off; that the period of His absence would be but "a little while," and that the day of His advent was so hidden that no one could calculate it, no one could say, "It cannot be in my day." "Of that day and that hour knoweth no man, not the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father only."

Looking to these intimations, the early Christians were ever on the eager watch to hail His Advent. It was the resting-place of their hopes, the strength of their souls, the very life of their joy. They allowed no object to intervene between them and their Lord's appearing; they were ever waiting and looking for it, as if all between it and them were a dreary, rugged waste. As, in a night of clouds, when no small tempest lies upon his vessel, the seaman's eye is ever on the outlook for the star of morning, so were their anxious eyes, amid tribulation and darkness, ever watching for the appearing of "the bright and morning star."

He did not, however, come in their day. The Bridegroom tarried, the King delayed His return. Was, then, all their waiting profitless? Were they as men disappointed, cheated, befooled? No! their watching was not in vain. Besides its being their Lord's command, it was blessedness unspeakable to them. It sustained them, comforted them, gladdened them, sanctified

them in a way such as no other truth, no other hope could have done. Verily they had their reward.

But are His promises made of none effect by this delay? Are we to suppose that when He said, "Surely I come quickly," He did not truly mean what He said? No. He deceived them not: nor did He speak at random, using loose or exaggerated language. And though they miscalculated the time implied in the "quickly," yet that did not prevent their holding fast the great idea involved in it, namely, the suddenness of the Advent, and the entire uncertainty as to its time. If the first age could say, "Ah! He has not come in our day; the word 'quickly' did not apply to our time;" the second age could take up the welcome promise, and say, "He came not in the first age, indeed, and thus far our ideas of His coming have not been verified; but His not coming in the first age is all the stronger reason for expecting Him in the second." So also might the third age reason from His not appearing in the second. And thus might each succeeding age most justly argue, concluding from His non-arrival in the preceding age, not that His coming was to be prolonged indefinitely, and that, therefore, they might cease watching and expecting, but that He must be so much the nearer in their day. Take a common instance. A friend promises you a visit "very soon." His language is such that he may perchance come to-morrow; and accordingly you wait for his arrival on that day. But he comes not. The third day passes, but still he comes not. What do you infer from this?



Do you say forthwith, "Oh ! he did not mean what he said ; I must have mistaken him ; he meant that I was to go to him, not that he was to come to me." Would you reason thus ? Not if you believed his word, and were assured that no hindrance could stay him. Not if you were really anxious for his arrival, and felt the dreary solitude of absence from him. On the contrary, you would say, "I know he will fulfil his promise, and that nothing *can* hinder him ; and therefore, since he has not arrived to-day, I may be more sure of him to-morrow." Every lengthening day would only make you the surer, as well as the more eager in your expectations.

Just so ought the Church to reason regarding the Lord's appearing. He came not in the first watch of the night ; but what of that ? We may more confidently reckon on His arrival in the second. He came not in the second ; but what of that ? We may surely expect Him in the third. He came not in the third ; but what of that ? Shall we weary of watching ? Shall hope deferred make our hearts sick ? Shall expectation give way, and our longings be quenched ? Shall we conclude that He cannot come in the *fourth* ? In that fourth and last watch of the night we seem now to be. And what shall we say ? My Lord delayeth His coming ? He has been so long behind the appointed time, and has so often disappointed us, that perhaps He may not come at all ? Shall we give birth to such thoughts, or utterance to such words as these ? Nay ; let us lift up our heads, knowing that now our

redemption must be drawing nigh. We are surer than ever that He is near, even at the doors. If this be the fourth and last watch of the night, then beyond that His stay cannot be prolonged, for He comes as the star of morning, the herald of the dawn. He must be nigh. He was near eighteen hundred years ago. He must be much nearer now. "He that shall come will come, and will not tarry."

If the warning words, "Behold, I come quickly," sounded with such solemnising power in the Church's early days, how much more loudly ought they to peal upon us now! If they broke like threatening thunder upon the slumbers of a careless world in these times, how appalling, how overwhelming now! If in the primitive age they carried with them such a potent spell to nerve and animate the Church with more than human vigour and endurance; to fill her soul with more than mortal joy; to bear her far above this earth, as upon eagles' wings; to disenchant the principalities and powers of darkness of all their power to harm; what ought they not to do now, when the revolution of so many centuries has brought us so much nearer the expected time?

Are these words of warning, then, consistent with the fact of so long an interval having to elapse before the coming of the Lord? So far as God is concerned, it is not hard to understand how there should be entire consistency between these two; for "one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day." But in so far as man is concerned, it may

not seem so easy to establish the consistency. Let us consider the difficulty. It is simply this. A far longer interval has taken place than the words of Christ seem to imply. How, then, could He intend to forewarn us, and stir us up to watchfulness?

On this I remark, that though the word "quickly" is used, the time is not fixed. Had the time been precisely given, and had the interval overpassed the appointed time, then truly we might have wondered. But no date is given. It is merely said, "I will not be long." How long He does not say. In like manner the command to "watch" is to be explained. Suddenness of arrival is that which it speaks of; and it is this *suddenness* that is made the motive to continual vigilance. Had a date been given, however, the idea of suddenness would have been entirely withdrawn. When He says, "Behold, I come as a thief: blessed is he that watcheth!" He is calling on the Church to prepare for His *unexpected* return,—a return which would not be long, and would be very sudden. The words, then, which the Lord used were such as to keep His Church ever awake; to prevent her from saying, "He is not near." There was no deception here. It was simply dealing with man according to his finite nature and his limited knowledge, instead of dealing with him according to God's infinite nature and unlimited knowledge. When, for instance, God speaks of our days as an handbreadth, and warns us by their brevity, He is dealing with us according to our ignorance, and not according to His knowledge. He knows

that yon little child, whom He is calling to consider life's briefness and uncertainty, is to live perhaps to fourscore. Yet He sends him the warning, "Thou mayest die to-morrow." Is there deception here? He is speaking to him after his nature. He is turning to good account man's utter ignorance of the future. He is shewing us one of the many ways in which it may be made a blessing. This may be called a deceptious warning, founded on our shortsightedness; but who is there that *feels* in his conscience that there is any deception in this matter? Do we not rather feel that this is the only way in which we could be treated, unless we were to be made partakers of Jehovah's omniscience, and thus cease to be capable of human responsibilities, or acted upon by human motives?

It is precisely so with the Church, in reference to the Advent of the Lord. It must be taken for granted that we are ignorant of the future; and the question is, in what way shall that ignorance be dealt with? Shall it be removed, and man let entirely into the secrets of God? That would be impossible, as well as inconsistent with his responsibility. If, then, the ignorance is to remain, is it not to be turned to profit? Is it not to be acted upon so as to be the medium of blessing? Surely it must be so. And this is what God has done. He has addressed Himself, if one may so speak, to our *ignorance*, and converted that into a mighty lever for acting most beneficially upon our motives and responsibilities.

But could this have been done had a date been given,

and a time fixed, on which we could calculate? I answer, No, it could not. A fixed interposing period, made known to us, removes the very *fulcrum* on which this lever was acting. It puts man in possession of a fact which will enable him to make calculations as to the exact time when preparation will be necessary, and meanwhile to say, "Take thine ease; eat, drink, and be merry." If it had been said to the primitive Church, Your Lord is to come in the year 1000, would not this have removed all necessity for *watching*? I do not say it would have destroyed the necessity for being *prepared*, though it would have weakened the motive; but it would have taken away all necessity for *watching*. For how is it possible that I can watch for an event which I am positively assured is not to take place for a thousand years hence? It does not remove the difficulty to say that faith can overleap the thousand years. I know that it can, and that it ought. But that is not the question. The point is, Can faith *watch* for an event which, it is assumed, shall not arrive for a whole millennium? Can faith say, "I know that Christ's coming shall not be for a thousand years, but yet I do not know but that it may be to-morrow?" If the word *watch* means anything, it must mean that the time is *not* known, that the interval is *not* ascertained. The moment it is positively ascertained, that moment *watching* ceases. I can *wait* in such a case, but I cannot *watch*. Now, it is not mere waiting for Christ that is demanded of us; it is not mere preparation; it is not mere looking for it; it is not mere longing for it;

—all these, I admit, are quite consistent with an ascertained interval of one thousand years. It is *watching* that is incompatible with such an interval. To bring it into harmony you must alter the meaning of the word. It is no longer *watching*. It is simply waiting, but nothing more.

If so, I ask, How is it possible that the Millennium can precede the Advent? How can I *watch* for that which I positively know to be a thousand years distant? And especially if these thousand years be so marked that I cannot mistake either their beginning or end, there can be no *watching* at all. None just now, for I know that one thousand years must elapse before He comes. None when these one thousand years are closing, for I shall know exactly the day when He cometh.

There is but one answer to this. It is founded on the apostle's caution to the Thessalonians in his Second Epistle. He tells them that the day of the Lord shall not come "except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition."\* It is argued that, as the apostle did not reckon the interposition of this event between him and the Advent to be inconsistent with the command to watch, so the

\* This argument of our opponents takes, of course, for granted, that the day of the Lord spoken of is really the Second Advent. If so, then they must admit that this is the same coming that is to destroy Antichrist; for the coming is only postponed, if we may so speak, until Antichrist shall arise. That which was "not to come" until the falling away should take place, must be that very same thing which does come as soon as that apostasy has taken place.

interposition of the millennial age cannot be inconsistent with it.

On this, I remark that the interposition of an *event* is very different from the interposition of a *period*. The latter seems to be incompatible with watchfulness, but not the former; more especially when that event is declared to be already in progress, as is done by the apostle when he says "the mystery of iniquity doth already work." For thus no *time* is given, and it is the *absence of time* that is the foundation of watchfulness. It is the presence of *time*, as an element, that destroys the possibility of watching; and it is the absence of that element that produces the watchful spirit. The event which the apostle interposes is one which he declares to be already begun. It is an event which might be consummated within a very short space; so short, that when known to be commenced, no man could say of it that it might not be brought to a crisis without delay. Time is a thing on which a man can calculate with precision; an event or a crisis is a thing on which he cannot pronounce. Its development may be with the unexpected suddenness of the lightning. We have, in our own day, witnessed so many instances of the rapid development of events; events which we should have judged to be the product of ages; that we, of all others, should be cautious of affirming that length of time must be allowed for an event which is frequently alluded to as one of startling celerity, alike in its "shooting forth" and in its passing away. "Behold at evening-tide trouble, and before the morning he is not."

It is no answer to this to say, that the development



of the Antichristian apostasy has already occupied ages, and therefore it is impossible to speak of it as an event of the kind referred to. For Scripture declares that it *is* just such an event of sudden crisis. Apart from this, however, is it not plain that we are measuring the prophetic aspect of the event by the historical one? We are supposing that because so long an interval has actually elapsed, therefore that interval must have been foreshewn: and that because we now see that the Antichristian leaven has taken so long to develop, therefore the early Christians must have *foreseen* this with equal clearness. If this could be proved to be the case, then the element of time would necessarily be introduced, and my argument overthrown. But I believe this *cannot* be shewn; and until it be so, the argument stands good. And does not the apostle's language seem as if intended to exclude the element of time, and to fix attention upon the event itself, as one which was on the very edge of bursting forth, and which, like a pent-up river, would *in an instant burst forth* so soon as a certain barrier should be removed? And further, was it not the intention of the Spirit of God, even in predicting *dates*, to exclude this element as much as possible? Was it not for this end that we read always of times, and days, and months? The shortest periods are selected, as if to prevent man from introducing an element which would have the effect of ungirding his loins, and saying, "My Lord delayeth his coming." Are not all the prophecies so worded as to prevent any age of the Church from saying, "The crisis cannot be in our day?" And does not this peculiar construc-

tion of prophetic language proceed upon the principle that an interposed *period* must destroy vigilance, but that an interposed *event* does not? That event was so predicted, that being known to be already in motion, its crisis might arrive at any time. And thus, while the Church was kept ever watchful for her coming Lord, she was also kept with her eye fixed upon the workings of that apostasy, not knowing but that in a moment the explosive and combustible materials might kindle, and with their hellish blaze wrap Christendom, if not the world, in flame.

Is not this the *position* in which we now stand? The apostasy has been working these eighteen hundred years. It has more than once in successive ages appeared to come to a crisis; yet *the* crisis has not yet arrived. The Papal apostasy is by far the likeliest thing to the predicted Antichristianity that the world has yet seen; but there is something beyond it, more fearful than any hitherto: in which shall be concentrated not merely *many* of the elements of evil that have formerly shot up in other days, but *all* the different forms of evil, apostasy, rebellion, idolatry, superstition, infidelity, that have broken loose upon the earth since the days of Cain. It is for this that we are now looking. We see the intermingling elements. We mark the rapid fermentation. We are startled with the swift career of action in each event, starting from the goal but yesterday, and finishing its race to-night. We are horrified at the giant stature which every form of sin reaches in a single day. It would seem as if some tropic sun of hell were glaring down upon us, ripening evil before

its time ; and preparing for us a vintage of iniquity, almost before "the sour grape is seen ripening in the flower."

But, besides all this, let us remember, that it is *before* the last mighty crisis that the saints are caught up to meet the Lord in the air. Christ's first action after leaving the Father's throne, is to raise His dead saints and change His living ones. He comes no doubt to destroy Antichrist, and to pour out the terrors of fiery judgment upon an apostate and blaspheming earth. But in these acts of final vengeance His saints are associated with Him : for "this honour have all the saints ;"\* and this is that to which our Lord refers when He tells us, that "two shall be together in the field, one shall be taken (caught up) and the other left."† These scenes of vengeance we shall behold ; but only afar off. Among them we shall not be. We shall have already entered our chambers and have shut our doors about us until the indignation be overpast. Safe hidden in the clefts of the rock, we shall look out and see far beneath us the havoc of the wasting storm, and mark the swellings of the fiery flood as it rolls its red billows over earth, swallowing up city and village, tower and temple, in the advancing current, hushing alike the roar of its tumult and the "noise of its viols," till, as, amid the deep vapour, we discern the smoke of "that great city Babylon," we take up the song of Moses and of Miriam, and call on heaven and earth to rejoice with us over the ruin of that habitation of devils whose power and pomp and glory in one hour have

\* Psalm cxlix. 6-9.

† Matt. xxiv. 40.

perished, laid waste like Sodom, swallowed up in that abyss out of which no second Babylon shall arise.

If these things be so, what manner of persons ought we to be in all holy conversation and godliness? For what is there now between us and the coming of the Lord? What is there to lead us to suppose that He is not nigh, even at the doors? If, even before the last crisis bursts upon the amazed earth, we are to be caught up out of it and taken away from the evil to come, then it is high time to awake out of our sleep. "The night is far spent, the day is at hand." The Judge standeth before the door. "WATCH, therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of Man cometh."

But a few years,—it may be less,—and we shall be beyond the circle where sorrow enters, beyond the ebbing and the flowing of human vicissitude, seeing Him face to face whom not having seen we loved; our battles fought, our wounds all healed, our toils forgotten, and our tears all wiped away.\*

\* "Would it not rejoice your hearts if you were sure to live to see the coming of the Lord, and to see His glorious appearing and retinue? If you were not to die, but to be caught up thus to meet the Lord, would you be averse to this? Would it not be the greatest joy that you could desire? For my own part I must confess that death, as death, appeareth to me as an enemy, and my nature doth abhor and fear it; but the thoughts of the coming of the Lord are most sweet and joyful to me; so that if I were but sure that I should live to see it, and that the trumpet should sound and the dead should rise and the Lord appear before the period of my age, it would be the joyfullest tidings to me in the world."—*Baxter's Works*, vol. xvii. p. 555.

## CHAPTER VII.

### PROOFS OF A PRE-MILLENNIAL ADVENT.

THIS is purely a question of *interpretation*. The order in which events are to occur depends entirely on God's eternal arrangements ; and our knowledge of that order must depend upon our right understanding of what God has written in His Word concerning it. Man's theories cannot aid us here ; nay, they may hinder us much. We must listen to the voice of God. Let us calmly and simply interpret His Word, throwing aside all bias, and being willing to learn of Him alone.

How often have human systems perverted the spiritual judgment, and unfitted us for listening to what the Spirit saith unto the Churches ! Have they not been used as instruments for corrupting the simple Word, and explaining away its natural meaning ? How frequently, when departing from the plain sense of the words, has our only reason been, that, if interpreted thus, our system must fall to pieces ! Had the fear of this collision not been in the way, the simpler view of the passage would undoubtedly have been acquiesced in. This abuse of system needs to be guarded against,

and nowhere more than in the present discussion. Our appeal is directly to the Word of God.

In more than one of the previous chapters I have had occasion to touch upon the proof of the pre-millennial Advent; let me now take up the question directly. It is impossible for me to adduce here the hundredth part of the proofs on this point, which lie scattered over the whole of Scripture.

I. *Isaiah* xxxiv.—This chapter commences with a summons to all the nations of the earth, announcing to them that the great day of God's wrath had come. At the third verse there is a description of the terrible slaughter. Then, in the fourth, we have a picture which cannot be mistaken—

“All the host of heaven shall be dissolved;  
The heavens shall be rolled together as a scroll.  
All their host shall fall down,  
As the leaf falleth from off the vine,  
As a falling fig from the fig-tree.”

This passage is very easily identified. It so corresponds in word and figure with Christ's description of His coming, and with Peter's description of the day of the Lord, that it is impossible not to conclude that all three refer to the same day and the same desolation. Indeed, this vision of *Isaiah* is one of the strongest passages which prophecy contains regarding that crisis of vengeance and despair. If it admits of being explained away, so as to mean nothing but mere natural disasters, such as the overthrow of kingdoms and the calamities of nations, then in truth it might be shewn that there is no such day of judgment at all, as

we have been accustomed to expect. All that is written of the coming of the Lord, and the accompanying terrors of that day, may be turned into figures signifying nothing but national overthrow and slaughter.

Taking, however, this passage in its obvious meaning, until a good reason can be shewn why we should use it in a *non-natural* sense, let us mark what follows. In this day of the Lord, this day of the dissolution of heaven and convulsion of earth, the awful doom of the adversaries of Jehovah and His people is foretold, the utter desolation of the people and the land. This occupies the remainder of the chapter; and then comes the glowing picture of millennial blessedness—"the times of the restitution of all things." "The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them, and the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose." I need not quote the rest. It is obviously the conclusion of the whole prophetic burden, and shews us very distinctly the order of events. The millennial scene of the 35th chapter *succeeds* the Advent scene of the 34th. In other words, the millennium *follows* the coming of the Lord.\*

\* Lowth, in his notes upon this chapter, states the connexion thus. His interpretation is given in very general terms, but it is very explicit as to the order and connexion of events:—"These two chapters make one distinct prophecy—an entire, regular, and beautiful poem, consisting of two parts; the first containing a denunciation of Divine vengeance against the enemies of the people or Church of God; the second, describing the flourishing state of the Church of God, *consequent upon* the execution of these judgments. . . . It seems reasonable to suppose, with many learned expositors, that this prophecy has a further view to events still future—to some



II. *Isaiah* lxxv. 17-25.—The former part of this chapter describes the apostasy and punishment of Israel, the state in which they have been for many generations, and still are. At the close of the 16th verse, the prophet very briefly adverts to the time when these “troubles shall be forgotten;” and then he proceeds to tell us the time and circumstances at large, and to give the reason why all the past shall be remembered no more :—

“For, behold !

I create new heavens and a new earth :

And the former shall not be remembered nor come into mind.

But be glad and rejoice for ever in that which I create.

For, behold !

I create Jerusalem a rejoicing,

And her people a joy.”

Now, here again we have an inspired interpreter to guide us. The Apostle Peter quotes this very passage in his second epistle : “We, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth.” And in the 21st chapter of the Apocalypse the same language is used. In Peter, and in the Revelation, there can be no doubt that the new heavens and earth are *literal*. Indeed, I do not suppose that any one denies this. Moreover, they evidently are not “created” until the second coming of the Lord. And if so, then we can be at no loss to discover the meaning of *Isaiah’s* words, *which are the basis of all the others*. They cannot

great revolution to be effected in later times, *antecedent* to that more perfect state of the kingdom of God upon earth, and *serving to introduce it*.”—LOWTH’S *Isaiah*, p. 296.

refer to the first, but to the second coming of Christ. Nay, what follows in the chapter proves this. For none of the blessed events predicted in the succeeding verses have yet been accomplished. They are still future. Jerusalem has not been delivered from her weeping. Longevity has not yet been restored to man. "The wolf and the lamb have not yet fed together." Nor has the time come when "they shall not hurt nor destroy in God's holy mountain." These are things for whose accomplishment we still wait. They are to come to pass in the day when Jehovah "creates new heavens and a new earth." The advent of Christ must then *precede* the millennium.

III. *Daniel vii.*—Here we have a description of the four successive Gentile empires; Babylonian, Medo-Persian, Macedonian, and Roman. These extend over "the times of the Gentiles," when Jerusalem was to be trodden down by them. During the existence of the fourth empire, the little horn, or Antichristian power, is seen to arise. Now, while this empire and the little horn which "came up" were still flourishing, we read, "I saw in the night-visions, and, behold, one like THE SON OF MAN CAME WITH THE CLOUDS OF HEAVEN, and came to the Ancient of Days, and there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages should serve him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away." In these words we have the second coming of the Lord predicted. The language is such as cannot be mistaken. But besides we have an inspired interpreter

here also, our Lord himself, who quotes these very words, "Then shall they see THE SON OF MAN COMING IN THE CLOUDS OF HEAVEN;" and, when answering the high-priest's adjuration, He again uses these words, Caiaphas at once understood the reference to the words of Scripture, and accused Him of blasphemy for applying them to Himself. The links in this chain of reasoning are thus very clear and simple. Daniel predicts that the Son of man was to come and receive His kingdom, while the little horn and the Roman empire were still in being; nay, that He was to come in order to destroy both of these, and to set up His kingdom. Our Lord quotes these words of Daniel, and applies them to His Second Advent. If so, there cannot possibly be a millennium before Christ comes; nay, it is expressly declared that the kingdom is to be given to the saints *at His coming*, not before it. There are other allusions in the New Testament to this passage in Daniel, such as Rev. i. 7, "Behold, He cometh with clouds;" all of them confirming the application of the prophecy to Christ's second coming. Indeed, it seems difficult to imagine how it can be applied to anything else. What reason can be given for departing from the simple meaning of the words?

IV. *Daniel* xii.—The 11th and 12th chapters of Daniel are one continuous prophecy. The former chapter begins with a prediction of Xerxes, King of Persia, and carries us downwards to the last Antichrist, whose destruction is announced in the concluding verse. Then the 12th chapter begins with pre-

dicting Israel's "time of trouble;" a time of trouble "such as there never was since there was a nation;" and also their deliverance from it by "Michael the Great Prince." Then it is added, "And many of them that sleep in the dust shall awake." Here, then, we have the downfall of Antichrist, the deliverance of Israel, and the resurrection, all placed side by side with each other. The inference from this is surely plain enough. There can be no millennium before the destruction of Antichrist, or the deliverance of Israel, or the resurrection. Now, we are sure that the last of these three events, at least, is at the coming of the Lord, and hence we conclude that the Advent must be before the Millennium. We do not see how this can be evaded, save by denying that the second verse refers to the resurrection. But this we hardly think will be attempted by any.

V. *Joel* iii.—Twice over in this chapter God proclaims His purpose of gathering the nations together into the valley of Jehoshaphat, there to sit in judgment upon them. He speaks of this as the time of the harvest and of the vintage, and we know the harvest is "the end of the age." (*Matt.* xiii. 39.) He speaks also of the "multitudes," assembled for judgment in the valley of decision. He speaks, too, of "the sun and the moon being darkened, and the stars withdrawing their shining." He tells us, also, that in that day "the heavens and earth shall shake." Now every one of these expressions is quoted in the New Testament, and applied to the time of the second coming.

As to the harvest, the Lord tells us, that in that day “the Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that shall offend, and them that do iniquity.” (Matt. xiii. 41.) And this is at His Advent. As to the multitudes assembled in the valley of decision, our Lord also thus speaks of that day of “decision,” or *separation*—“When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: and before him shall be gathered all nations; and *he shall separate them* one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats.” (Matt. xxv. 31.) As to the signs in the sun and moon, I need add nothing to what I have quoted in other parts. As to “the shaking of the heavens and earth,” we have the authority of Paul for referring it to the last crisis, as we shall immediately see. And thus it is manifest that it is of the second coming of the Lord, with its attendant signs and judgments, that God is here speaking, by the mouth of His prophet Joel. Keeping this in mind, let us mark what follows. “So shall ye know that I am the Lord your God dwelling in Zion, my holy mountain; then shall Jerusalem be holy, and there shall no stranger pass through her any more.” The times of the Gentiles are here described as fulfilled. Jerusalem has ceased to be trodden down by the foot of the stranger. Then it is added: “And it shall come to pass in that day, that the mountains shall drop down new wine, and the hills shall flow with milk, and all the rivers of Judah

shall flow with waters, and a fountain shall come forth of the house of the Lord, and shall water the valley of Shittim." Such is Joel's picture of Jerusalem in the day when her walls shall be rebuilt, and of Judea in the time when her former fruitfulness and plenty shall be restored, or rather multiplied sevenfold. Is not this the millennial state? Yet it is *after*, not *before*, the coming of the Lord, as the passage most plainly shews.

VI. *Haggai* ii.—This chapter contains a prediction of the universal shakings which are to lead to the final stablishing of all things. "Yet once, it is a little while, and I will shake the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land; and I will shake all nations, and the Desire of all nations shall come: and I will fill this house with glory, saith the Lord of hosts." And again, v. 21, "I will shake the heavens and the earth; and I will overthrow the throne of kingdoms; and I will destroy the strength of the kingdoms of the heathen; and I will overthrow the chariots, and those that ride in them; and the horses and their riders shall come down, every one by the sword of his brother." This prophecy has never yet been fulfilled. It was not so at the First Advent, because that period, instead of being one of shakings, was a time of universal peace. The kingdoms of the earth underwent no change at all. The heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land have suffered as yet no convulsion, but continue firm and stable. Peace, not war, calm, not commotion, heralded the Saviour's Advent.

Besides, we have the testimony of the Apostle Paul, that in his days it was unfulfilled. "Whose voice then (at Sinai) shook the earth, but now he hath promised, saying, Yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also heaven." The shaking is to be somewhat like the former one, but far more terrible and *universal*. He contrasts the *then* and the *now*; the *hath shaken* with the *hath promised*. *Then* He actually shook the earth, but *now*, at this present time, we have His promise that He will shake it again, and not the earth only, but also heaven. How distinctly he tells us that, at the time he wrote, there was a *promise of a future shaking*! Of course that could have nothing to do with the First Advent. But in connexion with the Second Advent there are numerous predictions of earthquakes and convulsions.

Let me further observe, that it is *after* this mighty and universal commotion that the Desire of all nations is to come. The shaking of all things is to precede and prepare the way for His arrival. And, after this, comes the promised "glory" (verse 7,) and the promised "peace" (verse 9); Jehovah at the same time as it were putting in His claim to the precious things of earth, the silver and the gold to be used by Him as He shall see fit (verse 8.) Then, as if to give us the loftiest anticipations of coming grandeur, He tells us that great as was the glory of the former temple, over whose fallen beauty the ancient men of Israel wept, yet far greater shall be the glory of the future house, of which He gives the promise; or rather, as it should



be rendered, "great shall be the glory of this house, the latter glory more than the former glory," for the comparison is not between a first and a second temple, but between a first and a second glory, as is evident from the third verse of the chapter, where we read, "Who is left among you that saw *this* house in her first glory? and how do ye see it now?" And from this we see that all the temples, beginning with Solomon's, are considered as *one*, even though they had been levelled and rebuilt. There have been three temples; Solomon's, Zerubbabel's, Herod's; but all these are regarded as but one house.

This promise of glory is a theme often sung by prophets. "I will glorify the house of my glory," says Isaiah; and there are many such visions of future grandeur, which I need not quote. They all concur in predicting the glory of the house and the people of God in the latter day, when Mount Zion shall be the joy of the whole earth, and Jerusalem the city of the Great King.

There is "peace," however, as well as glory, promised, after these convulsions, and after the arrival of the Desire of all nations. This peace has not yet been given to any land or city or nation of our troubled earth. But there shall be "peace" upon Israel, and "peace" over all the hills and valleys of this earth. After the tempest comes the calm; after midnight comes the morn; after wars and rumours of wars comes the day of universal peace.

Very distinct, then, is the *order* of the events here

set forth to us by the Prophet Haggai. There is first the universal shaking, and "the removing of those things that are shaken as of things that are made, that those things which cannot be shaken may remain." Then there is the arrival of Messiah. Then there are the times of the restitution of all things, the glory and the peace of the millennial reign.

VII. *Zechariah* xiv.—The whole of this chapter points forward to "the day of the Lord," and the events which are to follow it. I do not lay any stress upon the expression, "day of the Lord," though in the original it is different from and stronger than many similar ones. I do not say that this term itself can determine the time here spoken of to be that of the Advent. It is on what follows that I lean for fixing this.

The second verse predicts a siege of Jerusalem, and paints it very minutely. This cannot be the siege by Titus, nor any other that has yet taken place, for the description is totally unlike anything that has yet befallen the city; so totally unlike, that it must refer to something yet to come. In the midst of this siege, when the nations are gathered against the city, the Lord appears for its deliverance. "Then shall the Lord go forth, and fight against those nations, as when he fought in the day of battle." To make this more specific, and to point it out to us as really the Advent, it is added, "His feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east; and the mount of Olives shall cleave in the midst

thereof towards the east and towards the west, and there shall be a very great valley: and half of the mountain shall remove toward the north, and half of it toward the south: . . . AND THE LORD MY GOD SHALL COME, AND ALL THE SAINTS WITH THEE." What can this be but the Second Advent? "Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousand of his saints." If these words do not describe the Coming, what language can do it? There is nowhere in all Scripture a more minute and explicit statement regarding the Advent; and if *this* do not mean the literal Advent, how shall others mean it? \* What reason can be given for not accepting the plain sense of the words? Why seek another? Ought we not to abide by the *natural* meaning of the passage, unless it can be proved that the *non-natural* is the proper one? Taking the passage, then, as predictive of the Advent, let us mark what follows that

\* So thought John Bunyan, who thus writes in one of his works:—"The Quakers are deceivers, because they persuade souls not to believe that that Man that was crucified and rose again, flesh and bones (Luke xxiv. 38-40) shall so come again, that very Man in the clouds of heaven to judgment, as He went away—and at the very same time shall raise up all the men and women out of their graves, and cause them to come to the valley of Jehoshaphat—because there will He, that very Man, sit to judge all the heathen round about. I say, they strive to beat souls off from believing this, though it be the truth of God witnessed by the Scripture, (Joel iii. 11, 12, as also Acts i. 10, 11,) 'This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come (mark, the very same) in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven;' 'And His feet shall stand in that day (the day of His second coming) upon the mount of Olives.' Where is that? Not within thee! but that which is without Jerusalem, before it, on the east side."—*A Vindication of Gospel Truths Opened According to the Scriptures*—Works, vol. v., p. 486.

event. After mentioning the struggle between light and darkness which was then to take place, it is added, "It shall come to pass in that day, that living waters shall go out from Jerusalem ; half of them towards the former sea (Dead Sea), and half of them towards the hinder sea (the Mediterranean): in summer and in winter shall it be. AND THE LORD SHALL BE KING OVER ALL THE EARTH: in that day there shall be one Lord, and his name one. And all the land shall be turned as a plain from Geba to Rimmon, south of Jerusalem ; and it shall be lifted up, and inhabited in her place, from Benjamin's gate, unto the place of the first gate, unto the corner-gate, and from the tower of Hananeel unto the king's wine-presses." I need quote no more. The entire chapter from the eighth verse onward is descriptive of millennial glory and of the blessedness of Messiah's reign. Let the whole of this remarkable prediction be read in succession from the commencement of the chapter, and I do not see it possible to avoid the conclusion that the Advent must *precede* the Millennium.

VIII. *Luke xxi. 24.*—"Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled." Now, what follows the fulfilment of these times? The Advent ; for it is added that "then there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars . . . And then shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory." No one doubts that our times are the times of the Gentiles,—the times of Israel's down-treading. When are

these to end? At the coming of the Lord; not before. Gentile tyranny and Jewish suffering are to continue till the Lord shall come. How, then, can the Millennium be *before* the coming? Surely during it the Gentile will not tyrannise, nor the Jew be trodden down: and if so, then the Millennium must succeed that Advent, which is to put an end to this misery and oppression, to dethrone these abusers of their kingly power, and to exalt Israel to honour among the nations.

Besides the proof derived from this verse, the whole chapter in which it occurs is a testimony to the pre-millennial Advent. In it and in the corresponding chapters of the other evangelists, our Lord is enumerating the *signs* of His coming. He points to not a few, and on the ground of these He says, WATCH—"When ye see these things come to pass, then know that your redemption draweth nigh." Now, had the Millennium *preceded* the Advent, could He have failed to allude to it? Would it not have been by far the most prominent, the most striking, the most incontestable sign of His coming? It would truly have been the sign of signs, which no man could mistake. If a thousand years' blessedness on earth were to be the forerunner of His Advent, why does He not point to this sign as by far the most notable of them all? What reason can be conceived for its not being enumerated among the many others, save this, that it was to *follow*, not to *precede*, the appearing of the Lord?

The only answer I have heard to this is, that the millennial state will not be so very different from the

present as to make it a notable sign at all. The binding of Satan is said to mean his having somewhat less influence than he has at present, and "the people being all righteous" is called an Oriental figure. To this I have no other answer to give than a repetition of the innumerable passages which most broadly and most brightly declare the very opposite. Are these rich visions of glory upon earth a mere shadow? Is the Word of God to be thus diluted and made void? I cannot but think that there are few who have any real reverence for Scripture that would allow themselves to be so blinded by system, as to adopt such principles of interpretation. It is sad that men should deny the literal reign of Christ; but it is matter of yet more solemn sadness, that Christians should be found, who, in carrying out their spiritualising theory, should have landed themselves in so meagre, so barren a vision of the future. What though it should save their system, and harmonise its parts? Is that a sufficient reason for representing the glory of the latter age as a mere improvement and slight expansion of what is good in the present day? When God tells us that Satan is to be bound, does that mean that he is *not* to be bound, but still to roam at large? Incredible! When God presents to us prophetic pictures of universal holiness, as the very scenes that are yet to gladden the earth, heaping figure upon figure to exalt our conceptions of the universality of millennial peace, does He really mean us to understand that these are exaggerations, mere Eastern figures from which we must make large



deductions, in order to arrive at the truth? The *prophetic* scene is certainly very glorious; will the *real* scene only be an improvement upon what we see around us every day? I would not even seem to use the language of unkindness, but I should be speaking untruly and unfaithfully if I did not say that I regard such *dilutions* of Scripture with astonishment and alarm. First, we are asked to believe in a Millennium without Christ in person, and then, as if that were not enough, millennial blessedness must be stripped of all its glory, and reduced to a shadow or a spectre!

IX. *Acts* iii. 20, 21.—“And he shall send Jesus, which before has been preached unto you; whom the heavens must receive until the times of restitution of all things.” Here it is distinctly asserted that Christ is to remain in heaven until “the times of restitution of all things,” and then He is to be “sent.” The “times of restitution of all things” and the “times of refreshing” explain each other, for they obviously refer to the same period, a period which is to be introduced by Christ in person. This is the natural meaning of the passage.

It is objected to this that the expression “times of restitution,” &c., means “times of the *fulfilling of all things* which God hath spoken of by the mouth of all his holy prophets.” On this I remark, that this is not the meaning of the word as given in any dictionary. There it is said to mean “the bringing back of things to their former state.” And this surely ought to weigh with us. But let us see how it is used in Scripture.



The *noun* itself occurs nowhere else either in the Old or New Testament ; but the kindred verb is found frequently, and means *invariably* to “restore,” not to “fulfil ;”—as, for instance, Matt. xii. 13, “It was *restored* whole like as the other ;” chap. xvii. 11, “Elias must first come and *restore* all things ;” Acts i. 6, “Wilt thou at this time *restore* again the kingdom to Israel ?” Or, turn to the Old Testament—Jer. xvi. 15, “I will *bring them again* into their land ;” Ezek. xvi. 55, “They shall be *restored* as at the beginning.” These instances are sufficient to shew the meaning of the word, which is uniform in all the passages where it occurs. It never means *to fulfil* ; there are other words for *that* in frequent use throughout Scripture. Our translation is, in truth, the exactest that could be given ; all our former English translators, Wicliff, Tyndale, Cranmer, &c., give the very same sense ; and thus Calvin expounds the passage. After translating the words as we do, “the times of restoring,” he remarks, “If at this time we see many things confused in the world, let this hope refresh us, that Christ *shall once come that He may restore all things.*” How can anything, then, be more explicit ? And looking at these words alone, though no others were to be found, may we not (to use the words of Bishop Horne) “expect Christ’s second Advent to restore all things, to judge the world, and to begin His glorious reign ?”

X. *Rom.* viii. 19–23.—Here creation is spoken of as being made “subject to vanity,” and lying under a curse, evidently the curse which was pronounced

against it for man's transgression. It "groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now." But there is a promise of deliverance,—a deliverance which is evidently the same as the "restitution of all things," or the millennial state of blessedness. This, the apostle tells us, (ver. 23,) is to take place at "the redemption of the body"—that is, the resurrection, which we know is to be at the coming of the Lord. Thus creation is represented as looking forward for its restoration to that very time to which the saints are looking forward, the resurrection and the Advent. That event is to bring deliverance to them and to the whole creation. Mr Haldane, in his "Commentary" on this Epistle, brings out the sense very forcibly, and at great length. He shews that it can have no meaning but the one given above. Thus he writes :—"The apostle means to say that the creation, which, on account of the sin of man, has, by the sentence of God, been subjected to vanity, shall be rescued from the present degraded condition under which it groans ; and, according to the hope held out to it, is longing to participate with the sons of God in that freedom from vanity into which it shall at length be introduced, partaking with them in their future and glorious deliverance from all evil."\* The creation, then, is to go on groaning and travailing, the curse still weighing it down, and sterilising the soil, until Christ shall come to make all things new.

XI. 2 *Thess.* ii. 1-8.—In both Epistles to the Thessalonians the coming of the Lord is frequently referred

\* Vol. ii. p. 285.

to, and indeed the whole emphasis and meaning of the Second Epistle rest on the literality of that event. Let us gather out the different allusions to it which are scattered throughout both.

1. "To wait for his Son from heaven." (1 Thess. i. 10.)

2. "What is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming?" (Chap. ii. 19.)

3. "To the end he may establish your hearts unblameable in holiness before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints."\* (Chap. iii. 13.)

4. "We which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord, shall not prevent [or go before] them that are asleep: for the Lord himself shall descend from

\* This passage has been quoted to prove that, after Christ comes, conversion cannot go on upon earth, for *all* His saints are to come with Him. I confess I am surprised at the stress laid upon the word *all*, as if it necessarily meant every one. Owen, in his work upon the Death of Christ, after pointing out the many passages in which the "all" has a restricted meaning, thus concludes:—"Therefore, from the bare word nothing can be inferred, to enforce an absolute unlimited universality of all individuals to be intimated thereby." But passing from this, let me observe, that when Christ is said to come with all His saints, it must of course mean *all who are saints at the time when He comes*. It can mean nothing more. It cannot, of course, mean that He is to come with those who shall be saints after He comes. That is an absurdity. And if this passage simply means all who are or have been saints up to the time of His coming, it of course settles nothing as to future conversions. *That must be determined by other passages*. To determine it by this is an entire begging of the question. There are many direct texts which prove that there are to be conversions after He has come. But I do not enter on this here. .

heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first." (Chap. iv. 15, 16.)

5. "The day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night." (Chap. v. 2.)

6. "I pray God that your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." (Chap. v. 23.)

7. "The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power, when he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and admired in all them that believe." (2 Thess. i. 7-10.)

8. "We beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him." (Chap. ii. 1.)

9. "As that the DAY OF CHRIST is at hand." (Chap. ii. 2.)

10. "THAT DAY shall not come unless there come a falling away first." (Chap. ii. 3.)

11. "Then shall that Wicked One be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and destroy with the brightness of his coming." (Chap. ii. 8.)

12. "The Lord direct your hearts into the love of God, and into the patient waiting for Christ." (Chap. iii. 5.)

Here, then, are no fewer than twelve passages in which the coming of the Lord is spoken of; and this

in two brief Epistles, or eight chapters in all. The Thessalonians could attach but one meaning to all these various allusions, and would never think of understanding them in different senses, and with reference to different events. Besides, we know as an historical fact, that they really did so. Before the apostle wrote, they doubtless, like all the early saints, were looking for the Lord's coming. His First Epistle confirmed them in this, and awakened yet more fervent expectations. They were now filled with one thought, the immediate Advent. Some one, either belonging to themselves or another church, took advantage of this, and wrote an epistle in the name of Paul, foretelling the *instant* appearing of the Lord. They were thus "shaken in mind, and troubled." On receiving intelligence of their excited state, the apostle wrote his Second Epistle to allay this agitation. In correcting their error, he takes for granted that they were right in waiting for Christ, and also, that when he spoke in his First Epistle of the Advent, he really meant Christ's literal, visible, and personal coming. What, then, was the error which he corrected? That the day of the Lord had *arrived*.\* To correct this, he points out an event which must occur before the Advent,—the rising of Antichrist. But this is all. This apostasy was already in action; it was to go on and exalt itself; and then, when this Man of Sin had reached the

\* This is the meaning of ἐνέστηκεν. See Rom. viii. 38—"Neither things *present*, nor things to come;" οὔτε ἐνεστώτα οὔτε μέλλοντα. See also 1 Cor. iii. 22, vii. 26; Gal. i. 4; Heb. ix. 9.

very pride and pitch of his grandeur, the Lord was to come and smite him to the dust.

Thus it is very plain that the destruction of Antichrist and the Lord's Advent must be simultaneous, for *He comes in order to destroy him*. The apostasy began in the apostles' days. It has been growing and spreading ever since. It is to increase in greatness, "wearing out the saints of the Most High;" writing the name of blasphemy upon men's foreheads and hands; prevailing upon all the world to worship it and to wonder after it. Then, when seated most proudly upon the throne of iniquity, the Lord shall descend from heaven and destroy this destroyer of the earth. How, then, can the Millennium be *before* the Advent? If the Lord comes to slay the Man of Sin, He must also come to *begin* the millennial glory.

But must the "coming of the Lord" mean His personal appearing here? I think it must. What was it that the Thessalonians were looking for? The literal Advent. Then, by that Advent, Antichrist was to be destroyed. What event was it that was agitating them, and which the apostle tells them was "not to come" till there "should come a falling away?" The literal Advent. Then it must *of necessity be that very Advent which was to take place as soon as the falling away had come to pass*. Otherwise, how unmeaning the apostle's argument! When Paul wrote to the Roman Church that he intended to visit them, only he must first go up to Jerusalem with the contribution for the poor saints, did he not mean that when

this errand was discharged, he, the same Paul, would visit them in person? Would the postponement of the visit alter the *personality*, transmuting it from a *real* into a *spiritual* visit? In like manner, does the fact of an interval being to take place before the Advent, alter the character of the Advent at the close of the interval, so that that which was understood to be a *literal* thing before the interval, must evaporate into a *spiritual* thing on account of that interval having elapsed? The Thessalonians imagined that there was to be no interval at all, but that the Lord was to come forthwith. The apostle tells them that there was to be an interval, but that, *as soon as that was over, that very same event (not another of a different kind) would happen, which they had been looking for.*

But may the words not admit of a *spiritual* interpretation? The attempt has been made to spiritualise them. Another sense has been given, which is certainly not the natural, but the *non-natural*. Whether it can stand, we shall see.

What, then, is the expression which requires to be spiritualised? It is literally "the epiphany of His presence." \*

\* I do not think it needful to quote the Greek, as I am not writing a critical treatise: but if any one will carefully consult the original, he will find the above statements not only verified, but mightily confirmed. I might establish what is advanced here by reference to the ablest critics; but I merely quote two, as a specimen of the rest. Schoettgen thus translates the expression, "The Advent of Christ, which shall refulgently strike every eye, and whose majesty and glorious splendour no one shall be able to deny."—*Horæ Hebraicæ*,



The two words, "epiphany" and "presence," are frequently used separately, to denote the literal Advent; and surely when they both occur together, we are warranted in considering the expression as one of the most explicit that could have been used to denote the literal coming. This *double term* is certainly the strongest which occurs in these Epistles, and seems used, of purpose, by the apostle, to prevent the possibility of its being explained away. There are twelve references to the coming in these Epistles,—eleven are admitted by all to mean the literal coming. *Yet all these eleven are weaker* than the one in controversy, which is the twelfth. Is it not, then, most unaccountable, that the weaker should be interpreted literally, and the strongest explained away? Surely there is some bias warping the judgment here.

But further; the word "epiphany" occurs just six times in the New Testament. In one of these it refers to the first coming, which we know to be literal. In four others, it is conceded by all to point to the literal second coming. The sixth is the passage in question, and *it is stronger than any of the five*. They are as follows:—

1. "Until the APPEARING of our Lord Jesus Christ." (1 Tim. vi. 14.)

2. "Who shall judge the quick and the dead at his APPEARING and his kingdom." (2 Tim. iv. 1.)

*in loc.*, p. 846.—Again, Küttner paraphrases it, "The Advent of Messiah, illustrious by its splendour and majesty."—*Hypomnemata in Nov. Test.*, *in loc.*, p. 465.

3. "To all them that love his APPEARING." (2 Tim. iv. 8.)

4. "The glorious APPEARING of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ." (Titus ii. 13.)

A little above we asked, Why, out of twelve passages, all apparently having the same meaning, make that one which is the strongest, and least liable to suspicion, an exception to the rest? So, here we ask, Why, out of six distinct passages, in which the word occurs, make that which (by being coupled with another) is the strongest, an exception to the rest? Why spiritualise the *strongest* and leave the *weakest* to stand as it is? The natural meaning may, no doubt, obstruct or dislocate your system; but will you allow that to be a sufficient reason for inventing a *non-natural* sense?

In reply, it is said, that the word "coming" is used "spiritually" in the ninth verse of this very chapter. In reference to this, I crave attention to the following remarks:—

1. This argument, even when conceded, amounts only to a "may be," and a "may be" set in opposition to the strongest "must be" that I can conceive. What I have already advanced appears to me to amount to a positive and irresistible "must be." Of what force, then, is a mere "may be" in opposition to this? What critic can be content to found his hermeneutics upon so precarious a basis?

2. Though a *weaker* expression may be spiritualised, it does not follow that a much stronger one *may be*, far less *must be*, treated in the same way. A general term

may be ambiguous, but that is no reason for a particular and explicit one being equally so. Yet this is the meaning of the objection!

3. The terms are not *convertible*, which they would be, if this argument be valid. If this "brightness of his coming" be applicable to Antichrist equally with Christ, then there would be some force in the objection to our statements. But if this be inadmissible, the objection breaks down. How can we argue thus,—The word *coming* is applied *spiritually* to Antichrist, therefore the words "brightness of his coming" (which cannot be used in reference to Antichrist) may be applied *spiritually* to Christ? If the words were synonymous, I could understand the argument, but when they are not so, I confess I cannot. If  $a + b = b$ , and convertible with  $b$ , then whatever  $b$  represents,  $a + b$  may represent; but if  $a + b$  be much larger than  $b$ , and not convertible, then it is absurd in me to say, because I have discovered that  $b$  represents a certain sum, therefore  $a + b$  must represent the same.

4. Our objector seems to forget that he believes in a literal Advent of Christ as well as we, however far we may be asunder as to the time of it; whereas his reasoning proceeds on the supposition that the Advent of Christ is no more a literal Advent than that of Antichrist. His syllogism halts grievously. It should run thus: "The word *coming*, when applied to Antichrist, cannot be literal, *because there is no literal Advent of Antichrist*; therefore, the same word, when applied to Christ, cannot be literal, *because there is no literal*

*Advent of Christ.*" Though Antichrist's "coming" may not be personal, and therefore we may be at liberty to spiritualise the word, is that any reason for saying that we are at liberty to spiritualise that word (or, rather, a far stronger one) as applied to Christ, when we do believe in His literal coming at some time or other? The reason why the liberty was taken of spiritualising it, in the case of Antichrist, was, that we believed he was not to come personally at all. Had we acknowledged a personal coming in this case, we should not have felt ourselves at liberty to do this. How, then, can we feel at liberty to spiritualise the word, as referring to Christ, *when our reason for spiritualising no longer exists?* The figurative sense may be admissible in the case of him who is to come spiritually, but is that a reason for saying that it is admissible also in the case of Him who is yet to come literally and personally?

5. Of whatever strength this objection may be to those who deny a personal Antichrist, it has no force at all to those who believe in his personality. Now, though I cannot agree with some of the ancient, or others of the very recent, theories on the subject of a personal Antichrist, yet I do believe that the great Antichristian system is to have an individual head or king. This head or king is frequently prophesied of both in the Old and New Testaments. He is the representative of the whole vast body of iniquity with which the earth is to be overspread. And, as the head or representative of that body, I, so far at least,

recognise his literal personality. And if so, then the objection I have been refuting, though entitled to what weight it may have with a denier of Antichrist's personality, has no point or strength at all with a believer in that personality. It may be, perhaps, used as an *argumentum ad hominem*, but it can be nothing more.

Thus I have endeavoured to fix the interpretation of this passage. I have given what appears to me very strong reasons for taking it in its *natural* sense; it remains for others to produce their strong reasons for understanding it in its *non-natural* sense. They ought, however, to be prepared, not only to shew reasons why it *may be*, but why it *must be*, or *ought to be*, so explained. Surely, if their system be strong and coherent, it will be able to abandon mere *negative* ground, and advance to something more positive and aggressive in the matter of Scripture interpretation, by which alone the question between us can be finally decided.

XII. 2 *Peter* iii. 1-13.—The argument from this passage in favour of a pre-millennial Advent, I have already stated. It is simply this, that the "last days," which had begun in the time of the apostles, were to go on, abounding more and more in wickedness, scoffing, apostasy, and atheism, till suddenly broken in upon by the coming of the day of the Lord. I do not mean, however, to repeat what I have advanced. I wish merely to notice objections.

The chief objection is somewhat of this nature:—"This universal conflagration must so burn up and

destroy every living thing upon the earth's surface, that it is impossible to believe that men can come forth out of it to people the earth, as Millennarians believe." On this let me observe,—

This is no answer at all to our argument. It does not touch the difficulty. It may prove that there can be no Millennium at all; but what else can it prove? I adduce the passage to shew, that wherever the Millennium be placed, *it cannot be between the present time and the Advent*. The objection may very aptly be used to prove that *the Millennium in which we believe is an impossibility*; but how can it answer our argument, that *any Millennium* between this and the Coming is an impossibility, if those words of the apostle be true? It may compel us to alter our ideas of the *nature* of the Millennium, but not of the time and place which it occupies.

The truth is, that the passage presents difficulties to both parties; and it would be well that, with this concession made, they should sit calmly down to consider it. The Anti-Millennarian has to answer the question, How can you, with such a passage before you, believe that there can be a Millennium before the Advent? The Millennarian has to solve this other difficulty, How can you believe that men can exist in the midst of such wide-wasting fire, and come out of it to inhabit the earth? Leaving the former to escape from his dilemma as he can, I shall try to help the latter out of his; and, in doing so, I remark that this prediction of the apostle is not an isolated passage, but one of a large class, all



referring to the same time. I take the first specimen of these from the Apocalypse. Under the sixth seal a desolation equal to that predicted by Peter is described. What can be stronger than this?—"I beheld when he had opened the sixth seal, and, lo, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as the sackcloth of hair, and the moon became as blood; and the stars of heaven fell unto the earth, even as a fig-tree casteth her untimely figs, when she is shaken of a mighty wind. And the heaven departed as a scroll when it is rolled together; and every mountain and island were moved out of their places." (Rev. vi. 12-14.) Yet *after this we find men inhabiting the earth*. Again, at the pouring out of the seventh vial, we read, "Every island fled away, and the mountains were not found;" yet *after this we find men still upon the earth*, who have passed through this universal earthquake. Again we read in Isaiah as follows:—"Behold, the day of the Lord cometh, cruel both with wrath and fierce anger, to lay the land desolate; and he shall destroy the sinners thereof out of it. For the stars of heaven and the constellations thereof shall not give their light: the sun shall be darkened in his going forth, and the moon shall not cause her light to shine. I will make a man more precious than fine gold; even a man than the golden wedge of Ophir. Therefore I will shake the heavens, and the earth shall remove out of her place, in the wrath of the Lord of hosts, and in the day of his fierce anger. And it shall be as the chased roe, and as a sheep that no man taketh up." (Isa. xiii. 9-14.)



Can any intimation of destruction be stronger than this? Yet immediately *after it we find men inhabiting the earth, who have come out of it.* Again, take the 24th chapter of the same prophet. I need not quote it, for I have done so in another place; but I ask, can any destruction be more complete and more universal, in the widest and most unrestricted sense? It is not conflagration only, but convulsion, earthquake, dissolution, and every form of most thorough destruction.\* There is not in all Scripture such a picture of entire, consuming desolation and passing away as there is here. Every wasteful element is introduced. Every annihilating power is brought to bear upon the earth, as if for the purpose of making clean away with it and its inhabitants. Yet out of all this men come forth to dwell upon the face of the earth, after this universal earthquake and conflagration have passed away.

I need not quote other passages, though they are not a few. I give these as specimens. Now, I ask our objectors what they make of these passages? I point to these pictures of terrific wide-sweeping ruin, fire and earthquake, lightning and hurricane, all mingled together. I point to the plain statements which follow, as to men surviving these infinite catastrophes. And I ask, if you do not stumble at these, nor count them difficulties, why stumble at another of the same kind,

\* I would notice here that many of the expressions in this passage are precisely the same as in Peter,—only they are repeated and heightened, and magnified by the prophet far beyond those of the apostle.

and pronounce it insuperable? Before you ask me to reconcile Peter with my system, I ask you to reconcile Isaiah with yours. The difficulty exists. It exists in both systems. Both, then, are equally concerned to adjust or remove it. If it be solved against us, if it be found that we cannot account for such a state of things, then our theory of the Millennium must, of course, break down; but our first position remains unassailed, that, let the nature of the Millennium be what it may, its place cannot be between us and the appearing of the Lord. No solution of the difficulty touches that position; and this is all that we adduce the passage to establish.

But, besides this, there are, I think, allusions to this very difficulty in Scripture, and to the true solution of it. The Church, we are told, is to be taken up out of the midst of that fiery desolation and lodged in THE CLOUD with Jesus, safe from the wasting fire. But even though they remained, could they not be as safe in the midst of it as was Noah amid the swelling billows of the Flood; or, as the three Hebrew children in the fiery furnace? Israel also, or at least a remnant, is secured from harm. To this there are many allusions in Isaiah: "Come, my people, enter into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee, until the indignation be overpast." And, "I have covered thee in the shadow of mine hand, that I may plant the heavens, and lay the foundations of the earth," (Isaiah li. 16,) *i. e.*, "I will secure thee, O Israel, from evil, while I am engaged in preparing the new heavens and earth, so that those

calamities which are then to befall the earth shall not come nigh thee." As to the heathen remnant which shall survive that day, I do not find such express promises of preservation; yet as they are spoken of as "the heathen that are left," so it is probable that some method of preservation will be afforded them. And what is to hinder Him, who built the heavens and earth, from preserving for Himself a remnant to re-people the globe when the fiery deluge shall have passed away? Can He not provide a shelter for as many or as few as He shall please to deliver? Is anything too hard for Him? Is His hand shortened that it cannot save? The only question is, has He so purposed and declared? If so, nothing shall hinder it,—fire, nor storm, nor earthquake, nor the terrible hail which "is reserved for the time of trouble, against the day of battle and war" \*

XIII. 1 *John* ii. 18.—"Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now there are many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time." I notice this passage in proceeding onwards, but I do not dwell upon it, as I have already taken out of it the argument which it contains. It states that the last time was come, that the mark of this time was the prevalence of antichrists, whose power was to increase, as we have seen, until the Lord should come. There is no room, then, for inserting the Millennium between the close of this time and the Advent.

XIV. *Rev.* xviii. and xix.—The eighteenth chapter

\* *Job* xxxviii. 23.

describes the greatness and the ruin of Babylon, very minutely and very terribly. And how does it close? With the marriage-supper of the Lamb. No sooner is the doom of Babylon secured and her smoke seen ascending, than the ALLELUIA of the Bride begins, and she sits down with the Bridegroom at the marriage-supper. Now, as all admit that the marriage-supper is not till the Advent and the resurrection, I do not see how it is possible to escape the conclusion that there can be no Millennium till then. Where is there room for it between the fall of Babylon and the marriage-supper?

I had marked other passages to be adduced as proofs of the pre-millennial Advent, but I have prolonged the discussion on some of the above to such an extent that I must set them aside. Those already dwelt upon are sufficient. Each of them singly might be enough to determine the question; how much more the cumulative demonstration afforded by the whole together? They are not mere *negative* proofs, intended to overthrow an adversary; they are all *positive*, designed to build up a system. Would that our objectors would try this more excellent way!

## CHAPTER VIII.

### DIFFICULTIES.

To a Jew there must have been something very perplexing in the prophecies regarding Messiah. The description given of Him was apparently most contradictory; and it did indeed require a simplicity and strength of faith far beyond what we suppose, to receive truths which seemed so much at variance with reason, and so irreconcilable with each other. It was not merely to a certain system of his own that they were hostile; in that case it would have been no great stretch of faith to believe what God had revealed, though it might appear totally adverse to theories which he had been laboriously constructing, it may be, from the Word of God. But these predictions were so incomprehensible, so staggering to reason, so difficult to harmonise with each other, that we cannot but wonder at the simplicity of faith with which the pious Israelites received these revelations.

They had to believe that their Messiah was to be God, yet also man; that His goings forth were to be from everlasting, yet that He was to begin his life as an infant; that He was to come from heaven, yet that He was to be born at Bethlehem; that He was to be per-

fectly holy, yet that He was to be the offspring of a sinful woman upon earth; that He was to be the Prince of life, yet that He was to die; that He was to be King of kings, yet that He was to hang upon a cross; that He was to be fairer than the children of men, yet that He was to be without form or comeliness. These, and innumerable other *apparent* contradictions, they were called upon to believe. How wondrous the strength of their faith! Instead of wondering at their unbelief, we are almost inclined to be amazed at their faith. At least, we may well do so when we compare their faith with ours. For we are staggering continually in unbelief at the predictions regarding His second coming, and the apparent contradictions which they are supposed to involve; yet all these together do not present us with so many things that seem to us so inconsistent, incomprehensible, impossible, as even one of those others regarding His First Advent.

There is no argument now used to shew the absurdity or impossibility of the pre-millennial Advent, which might not have been urged with tenfold force by a Jew in his day, against Messiah's first coming. What is the sum of these arguments? Just this; "We cannot reconcile a personal Advent and reign with the intercession of Christ in heaven. We do not see how Christ can be said to come with all His saints, if there are to be men converted after He comes. We cannot conceive how there can be such an incongruous mixture upon earth as the risen saints, with their glorified bodies, and others still in mortal flesh. We cannot

think of so degrading Christ as to bring Him down to earth to reign."

This is the substance of anti-millennarian arguments. These are conceived to be such insuperable difficulties that, on account of them, we ought to give up the idea of a personal Advent and reign. But what are these in comparison with those which the Jews had to encounter? Absolutely nothing.

We deny that these difficulties are insuperable. We can see much further towards a solution of them than the Jew could towards a solution of his. Nay, we think we can explain them satisfactorily. But even though we could not, are we prepared to make these our reasons for not taking the Word of God in its plain and obvious sense? Are we prepared to say to an opponent, "No doubt, your view of the passage *seems the more natural so far as the words and the context go*; but then, it is irreconcilable with my ideas of the intercession of Christ, and of the dignity of Christ; and therefore I am forced to seek another meaning, even though that does not appear so natural."

What would a believing Jew have said to this before Messiah came? Would he not say, "Are these your only reasons for turning aside from the literal sense of Scripture? If these be sufficient, then I have enough of such. I find it written that Messiah is to be born at Bethlehem; and if I were reasoning as you do, I should say, That *cannot* be; and Bethlehem must not be taken literally, for He is said to be from everlasting. Alas! what fearful havoc I should make in Scripture



were I adopting your principles, and making my interpretations turn upon my ideas of the possible or the impossible, the comprehensible or the incomprehensible. In that case I must either give up my hope of a Divine, or my hope of a human Saviour, for I cannot reconcile them." Or again, what would an unbelieving Jew say to such a line of reasoning? Had Paul adopted it in arguing with his countrymen, what would have been their answer? Something of the following:—

"Your whole theory proceeds upon the principle that you cannot admit what appears to you impossible, or at variance with systems of Divine truth. Now, I hold that this doctrine of yours concerning Jesus of Nazareth is a thing incomprehensible; it is at variance with innumerable texts which speak of Messiah as a glorious King; it is utterly degrading to Him. Is it not said in Zechariah that when He shall come all His saints shall come with Him; and how can you maintain that there are to be other saints after that? The thing is impossible, on your own principles. If you will say that you are prepared to take Scripture just as you find it, whatever be the difficulties which reason or theory may present, then I confess I cannot answer you; but as long as you make Scripture to bend because it comes into collision with *your* principles, you need not wonder at my wishing it to yield when it comes into collision with *mine*."

Upon anti-millennarian principles, I do not see how a Jew could have believed in a suffering Messiah. He must either spiritualise the passages which relate to His

first coming, or be content to admit a difficulty which nothing but the event could fully solve.

We address an unbelieving Jew, and say to him, "Why do you not believe that Jesus of Nazareth is your Messiah? Do not all your prophets bear testimony to Him?" "Which of our prophets?" he might ask. We answer, "Isaiah, for instance, tells us that He was to be born of a virgin; and Jesus was so born." "But you know (he would reply) that is an impossibility, and therefore you must not take the text literally; it must mean something else." Or, we point to the passage which speaks of His being marred more than any man; he still answers, that to take that literally is to contradict other passages, and therefore it must be explained in some other sense. Should we not, in such a case, take our stand upon the plain meaning of the words, and tell him that he was misinterpreting Scripture, and refusing to receive it because it was inconsistent with his ideas of the Messiah? We say, "May not your ideas be wrong? Are you not interposing your theory between Scripture and its natural meaning? May not your system of truth, by which you are measuring every passage, be inaccurate in some respects, or, at least, are you not overstretching it? May not these other texts, apparently contradictory, turn out after all to be quite in harmony with the others?" No. He will admit none of these suppositions. His system of truth, his theory of doctrine, is the rule he goes by, and in this balance he weighs each text that you adduce.

But suppose we were *spiritualisers* ourselves, and he were to turn round on us.

“What do you make,” he might ask, “of those passages which speak of Messiah as sitting on the throne of David, and of the whole earth enjoying peace under His dominion?”

“Oh,” we answer, “these are texts which are not to be understood literally. They must be taken in a *spiritual* sense; they mean that He is to reign in the hearts of His people, and that there will be a great spread of religion over the earth.”

“A very good meaning, no doubt,” he might reply, “but it certainly is as far from being *the* meaning as any of my explanations which you deny; and as for this spiritual sense which you speak of, it is precisely the same kind of sense as that which you denounced in me, only you give it a more honourable name. But what *reason* can you give for rejecting the literal sense? Is it impossible? Is it absurd? Why will you not take the sense which you wish me to take? Why call me a perverter of Scripture for doing the same thing that you yourself are doing?”

“Oh, but,” we reply, “our system of truth shews us that the literal sense is an impossibility.”

“Your system of truth? And do you mean to measure Scripture by your system, and call me an unbeliever for measuring it by mine?”

“But our system of doctrine is founded upon the Word of God.”

“But may it not be *founded* upon the Word of God,

and yet, *as a system*, be a very insufficient standard by which to try particular texts? Is there not a danger of carrying it too far, and imagining contradictions to exist between it and Scripture where none are to be found?"

"Explain yourself."

"Take the passages referred to about Messiah sitting on the throne of David. Is it not possible for our system to be true, and yet these texts to be literally interpreted? I believe that Messiah will reign in the hearts of His people, but I do not see how that prevents me from believing that He is to sit upon the throne of David. But, apart from this, let me ask you how you got this system by which you are measuring Scripture?"

"Oh, we got it by a careful study of the Word of God."

"And in studying the Word to construct your system, did you take it literally or spiritually? For example, did you take the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah literally or spiritually?"

"Oh, literally, of course; the words are too plain to admit of any other sense."

"Then I think you stand self-judged."

"How so?"

"Why, you take scripture literally in order to construct your system, and then you apply that system to prevent other scriptures from being taken literally."

Or let me bring the matter to a closer bearing. Let me argue with the anti-millennarian. I ask, "How do

you interpret such expressions as 'we shall reign on earth?' "

"Oh, spiritually, of course."

"But why *of course*? What objection have you to take the words in their natural sense? Can you give a reason for departing from the plain meaning? It seems so plain that I wonder you should ever think of turning it aside. Are we not to abide by the literal unless there be good reasons for quitting it?"

"Yes; but there are good reasons for spiritualising this and similar expressions."

"What are these reasons?"

"The consequences that would result from admitting a literal interpretation."

"But are consequences deduced by you, and after all, perhaps, very illogically, a sufficient reason for rejecting the literal sense of so many passages of Scripture? Are your ideas of what 'ought to be,' to be your rule of interpretation?"

"But I do not take *my* ideas, I take *God's* ideas as my rule."

"Well, but that is begging the whole question; for are we not inquiring what are God's ideas as contained in this passage? You tell me that the literal meaning cannot be the true meaning, because you can prove that certain consequences must flow from it which are inconsistent with ascertained doctrine. But ought you not to be very sure that the consequences flow, before you make them a reason for such an interpretation as yours? Do you not think it

possible that you may be wrong in your deductions, especially when these are applied to things which are yet to come,—to a state of things of which we can know nothing by experience or history? May I not turn round on you and say, Your doctrine may be right, but your inferences must certainly be wrong, for they run directly in the face of the plain meaning of so many passages. *They assume the necessity of a non-natural sense of Scripture.* I acknowledge, for instance, your doctrine as to the intercession of Christ at the Father's right hand; but when you infer from this, that intercession elsewhere is an *impossibility*, and that therefore the doctrine of His reign on earth is a fable, I interpose at once, and deny your inference. I ask you for proof. Your ideas of the nature of that intercession are nothing, if not founded upon Scripture. You say that none can be converted after Christ comes, because His intercession must cease as soon as He leaves heaven. I ask, How do you know that it must cease? Are you not attaching an importance to a *locality* which Scripture does not; an importance which I must call a very carnal one? I know that it was needful that Christ should go up to the Father's right hand to present His sacrifice and intercede; but having done that, tell me if it is unscriptural to say that He may carry on His intercession wherever the Father's purpose may require it? \* It was the Father's

\* "Upon supposition of the obedience of Christ in this life, and the atonement made by His blood for sin, with His exaltation thereon,—there is nothing in any essential property of the nature

purpose that He should ascend up to heaven, there to make intercession for us: and may it not be the Father's purpose that this work should be carried on upon earth when He comes again in His glory? If God has said so, who am I that I should dispute the matter with God? And the whole question is just, *has God said so?* If He has, let us believe it. It is an entire begging of the question to say that He cannot intercede anywhere else. If God sees fit, He can; and the passages in dispute are the very passages which prove that God has told us that He will."

Besides, let me ask, how were sinners saved before the ascension of Christ? Was it not upon the credit of His intercession when He should ascend? And if, upon the credit of that intercession, sinners were saved during the four thousand years before He went up to heaven, it is a bold thing to say that none can be saved upon the credit of that intercession for the thousand years after He has left it. But did not Christ intercede on earth? And were not His intercessions there just specimens of His intercession in heaven? Divines have been accustomed to take the 17th of John as a literal and actual intercession. They have supposed that in His words on the cross, "Father, forgive

of God, nothing in the eternal unchangeable law of obedience to hinder, but that God might work all those things in us unto His own honour and glory, in the eternal salvation of the Church and the destruction of all its enemies *without a continuance of the administration of the offices of Christ in heaven*, and all that sacred solemnity of worship wherewith it is accompanied." — Owen's "Christologia," chap. xx.



them," He literally and truly "made intercession for the transgressors." They have generally supposed that He interceded during the forty days in which He remained on earth after His resurrection. But if the opinion I speak of be true, all this is an absurdity. He could not begin to intercede till He went up to heaven, and the moment that He leaves the throne, He must cease to be an intercessor! Is there a word of Scripture for this? Are there not many entirely opposed to it? And does it not shew a narrow view of what intercession is? Does it not indicate an over-attachment to a locality, and a complete oversight of the real reason for locality being alluded to in intercession at all? Is there not something degrading in the idea of confining Christ's intercessory power to a particular spot; as if His influence were a contracted territorial authority, which must leave Him as soon as He crossed the boundaries of heaven?

But I must not dwell longer on this point. It is the anti-millennarian stronghold. Whether it be impregnable or not, I leave others to determine. To me it appears a setting up of *system* against *Scripture*; or, rather, something worse, a setting up of man's inferences from system against the plain words of God. It is theory *versus* Scripture. There may be difficulties in Millennarianism, but this is a wrong way of attempting to meet them. For, even granting that it relieves us of one class of difficulties, it does so only by raising up another and far more formidable class. It relieves us of systematic or inferential difficulties, only to

encumber us with a host of textual and direct ones. If we adhere to such a method, is there not danger of making the Word of God of none effect by our tradition? Is there not a danger of falling into the same errors with regard to the second Advent into which the Jews fell in reference to His first?

It may be easy to contract or elongate a passage according to the measurement of our system, but what if, in so doing, we are corrupting the words of the God only wise? Our object should be to find out what God really meant, not to discover what, according to our system, He ought to have meant.

We bring the matter to a simple test. Granting Millenarianism to be true, could it have been expressed in different language from what we have in Scripture? Granting that anti-millenarianism is true, then is not the language of Scripture most ambiguous and dark? In the former we take Scripture simply as we find it; in the latter we read it through the distorting medium of system. In the former case we are listening directly to what God is speaking to us; in the latter case, we only hear as much of His voice as our system allows.

As to another of the difficulties adverted to above, I mean the mixture of the risen saints with the mortal tenants of the earth, I have a few considerations to offer. The objection taken, is wholly founded upon *our ideas* of what is right and proper, carnal or spiritual. These are, of course, the ideas of men who cannot be expected to understand the harmony of a

system still future and undeveloped. We are not in circumstances to pronounce a judgment upon the subject. We may be unable to see the propriety of such an intermixture, yet there may be in it nothing improper, nothing degrading, nothing carnal. Are we prepared to say, that God, for infinitely wise and gracious ends, might not ordain such a state of things, however strange it may appear to us? We know so little of the details of the coming age that we should be very slow to prejudge these, and very cautious in making the laws of the present a standard of the laws of the future. If ever such an objection could have been taken, it would have been in reference to the incarnation of the Son of God, and His sojourning in the dwellings of the children of men. How carnal, how low, how degrading, that intermixture might have been pronounced,—immeasurably more so than the intercourse of risen saints and mortal men. What! the Son of God become an infant, lie in a stable, be cradled on a woman's knee, grow up as a boy in Nazareth, sit at our tables, dwell under our roofs, eat, drink, weep, sleep, speak, be clothed as we are! How carnal! Yet all this took place. Human ideas of degradation and carnality were found utterly at fault. *And may they not perchance be found equally at fault again?* I think it not unlikely that they may. Man has once erred most egregiously when trying to cast the future in his own mould in preference to God's. He may now be erring no less widely and foolishly when again trying his hand at the same process. It is cer-

tainly going beyond his depth, beyond his warrant, and beyond what the experience of the past is teaching him, to pronounce upon the propriety or impropriety, the carnality or the spirituality of a future condition of things,—a condition, of whose laws, whose ordinances, and whose harmonies he can know absolutely nothing, save from the *direct* Word of God.

But all this is mere negative statement. It may silence, but it may not be enough to convince. True. And the *positive* demonstration lies in the passages of Scripture which make known to us God's order and purpose in the millennial state. On these I do not mean to enter here. I am simply attempting to clear off some difficulties. Apart, however, from these Scripture proofs, on which alone a system can be built, and by which every system already builded must be tried, there are some parts of inspired history which seem to help our understanding of the matter. There has been, ever since man was upon the earth, an intermixture of what appears to me a far more perplexing kind. I mean that of angels. I do not refer to the angelic *appearances* recorded in Scripture. I admit that these fall short of proof in this difficulty. They do not touch the exact point of the objection, viz., the continual intercourse of the two classes of beings alluded to. But is this all that is revealed of angelic visitation, angelic intercourse, angelic ministry? "Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?" Do they not *continually* encompass us about? Are they not

on our right hand and on our left, day and night? It is only occasionally that they have come forth from their invisibility, and held personal intercourse with men. Yet, though invisible, they are always with us, and, as Owen shews at great length,\* watching over us, suggesting good thoughts, preserving us from evil, warding off the assaults of Satan, attending upon us in our going out and coming in. Here is an intermixture which some might pronounce carnal. And if this be going on unceasingly between holy angels and unholy men, why may not the like intercourse be carried on between the perfect saints and imperfect inhabitants of earth? In this age, angels are God's messengers. But the "world to come" He hath not put into subjection to angels, but to man, even to His own Son and His risen saints. They are to be God's ministers, God's kings, God's priests, to fulfil His purposes among the children of men upon the new earth.

But there is another intermixture more carnal still, that between angels and devils. As Dr Owen shews, one special end of the ministry of angels is to defeat and counteract the plans and assaults of Satan and his angels. Thus two vast bands are filling the air and roaming the earth together. The armies of heaven and the legions of hell are at present occupying, to a certain extent, the same sphere of operation. There must be a continual mixture, and of a kind so fearful that we shrink from dwelling on it. This mixture will cease in the millennial state. Satan

\* On the Epistle to the Hebrews, chap. i. verse 14.

will be bound, and his hosts of darkness no longer roam the air and move to and fro upon the earth. Then there will be far less of what is called carnal and degrading. For heaven and earth shall be made new. Angels and devils shall no longer meet together. But the risen saints shall take the government of the world, executing God's purposes and fulfilling His commands. And as heaven is the proper home of angels, whence they are continually coming and going to this earth with messages of mercy or errands of judgment; so the new Jerusalem, which shall be to earth what the pillar of cloud was to Israel, shall be the habitation of the saints, out of which they shall go forth to bear rule for Christ, and administer the holy government of a holy world.

It is replied to this, that angels are invisible in their ministry amongst us, and that therefore their case proves nothing as to the difficulty in question. To this I answer, How do we know that the saints in the coming age will be *always* visible? Can they not execute their kingly office without the ever-visible pomp and glory of the present kings of earth? But besides, how is it that the visibility can alter the case or make the mixture less carnal? It is the nearness, the closeness of contact, that makes it so degrading; and how does the *invisibility* of angels remedy this? If saints are to be in "the world to come" somewhat as angels are in this, only with a higher dignity and office, then what objection can be raised against their intercourse with the inhabitants of earth in that new



state of holy blessedness, which may not much more forcibly apply to the ministry of angels now as they attend us day and night, passing to and fro amid the wretchedness and sin of this defiled earth?

I have thus noticed the chief difficulties which are said to lie in the way of the Millennarian system. In looking back upon these, I am astonished that there should be so few. In a state of things so new, so unlike the present, so much at variance with what the world has ever seen, we might have looked for perplexing knots and apparent contradictions. But how few are these! And these few, how trivial! Had they been tenfold stronger and more numerous, they could not have prevailed to shake the explicit revelations of God. But seeing them so feeble and so few, I both rejoice and am amazed. And oh! how soon may these jarring elements in prophecy be reconciled, and all apparent discord melt into blessed harmony! How speedily may the coming age evolve in unquestioned reality, and bring forth in all the perfection of Divine symmetry, that very system which we have now to labour so hard to prove and expound to the objector,—that very system which some pronounce perplexed, incoherent, impossible, which others have not scrupled to deride as a misshapen fable, a wild and broken dream!\*

\* A careful perusal of Butler's "Analogy of Religion" would tend to the removal, not only of the above difficulties, but of the *ground* on which they rest. "The things objected against," says the Bishop, "how foolish soever they appear to men, may be the very best means of accomplishing the very best ends."—Part ii. chap. iv. sect. 2. In his sermon "On the Ignorance of Man," we



read, "We may learn with what temper of mind a man ought to inquire into the subject of religion; namely, with the expectation of finding difficulties, and with a disposition to take up and rest satisfied with any evidence whatever, *which is real*. He should, beforehand, expect things mysterious, and such as he will not be able thoroughly to comprehend or go to the bottom of. To expect a distinct comprehensive view of the whole subject, clear of difficulties and objections, is to forget our nature and condition; neither of which admit of such knowledge with respect to any science whatever. And to inquire with this expectation is not to inquire as a man, but as one of another order of creatures. . . . . It is thought necessary to be thoroughly acquainted with the whole of a scheme, even one of so narrow a compass as those which are formed by man, in order to judge of the goodness or badness of it; and the most slight and superficial view of any human contrivance comes abundantly nearer to a thorough knowledge of it, than that part which we know of the government of the world does to the general scheme and system of it, to the whole set of laws by which it is governed. From our ignorance of the constitution of things, and the scheme of Providence; from the reference which the several parts have to each other and to the whole; and from our not being able to see the end and the whole, it follows that, however perfect things are, they must necessarily appear to us less perfect than they are."

## CHAPTER IX.

### OUTLINES OF PROPHETIC STUDY.

How are we to study prophecy? First of all, let us study the *chronology* of the subject. I do not mean to say that this can be done entirely apart from, and previous to, some amount of attention to the details; but still our first object should be to give most careful heed to the chronological parts, and to make our study of details bear upon this especially.

In studying prophecy, just as in studying history, we can make but inconsiderable progress without chronology, or, at least, without some chronological method to keep us from confusion and entanglement. Many a foolish prophetic interpretation might have been avoided, had this been attended to. We may, perhaps, be able to strike out some ingenious and correct interpretations of particular passages or visions, and be able to say that such and such events are, some time or other, to fall out in the future, or have fallen out in the past history of our earth, but how, or when, or in what order, we can with difficulty contrive even to guess. We read of a variety of events which future times are to witness; of the restoration and conversion of the Jews, the coming of the Son of man, the destruction of

the apostate nations, the downfall of Antichrist, the first resurrection, the kingdom of the saints ; and perhaps we have a tolerably correct idea of them as *isolated* events. But without some sort of chronology or system of arrangement, we can have no more. If we would construct our prophetic map with correctness, we must first sketch our outline, and lay down our latitudes and longitudes. Our telescope must be adjusted to its proper focus before we can expect to have a distinct and regular view of the scene to which it is directed.

The chronology of prophecy ought, then, to have a prominent place in our prophetical inquiries. In proportion to the correctness of our views on this point, will be our success in dealing with the details of the subject. Many, we are aware, deny this ; they look upon individual prophecies as dark, and upon their chronology as darker still ; and hence they cannot conceive of that which is dark being illustrated by that which is darker. They seem to regard most prophecies, especially those which involve chronology, as little better than well-constructed riddles, affording a fair field for ingenious exposition and amusing arithmetical conjectures. They can see little in them but vague, unclassified statements, capable of any meaning or order, according to the ingenuity or caprice of the expositor, and are disposed to think that the best that can be said of them is, that they were not *intended* to be understood or arranged. They read the Scriptures, but it is with no expectation of thoroughly understanding them, and are content to pick up here and there a

few bright gems, all the rest remaining confused and shadowy.

But there is more system in the Bible than these suppose ; not in one part of it only, but in all ; historical, doctrinal, prophetical. It is by no means difficult to trace throughout them the existence of a plan most regular and well constructed. It may astonish some to be told this ; and to be told, moreover, that it would be difficult for a series of prophecies to be given in symbolical language more plain and systematic than those which the Spirit of God has conveyed to the Church in the books of Daniel, the “man greatly beloved,” and John, the “beloved disciple.” Any careful reader will see that the prophecies they contain are strictly chronological ; and that in two respects ; both because they preserve a regular order and succession of events in all their details, and because, by many hints thrown in here and there, they give us data for fixing the general period within which the specified events are to occur, and for determining their commencement, duration, and close. This is one of the advantages we possess in studying the visions of Daniel and John. We have merely to interpret what is already arranged. In other prophecies, as those of Isaiah, Jeremiah, or Ezekiel, there is little order of succession observed. Events are not detailed so regularly one after the other, nor are their several parts always knit together. We have to search about for links by which to fasten them to each other, so that they may be fully classified and

arranged; but in Daniel and John much of this is already done.

In return for this advantage which the chronological possess over the detached or irregular prophecies, there is a disadvantage, if we may call it so, connected with the former from which the latter are free; and this is, that the former are generally conveyed in symbolical language, while the language of the latter is more literal, and approaching, in many places, the style of history. In Daniel, for instance, we have the vision of the great image, in which we have concise views of four great monarchies which were successively to appear on the earth, from the times of the prophet to the setting up of the kingdom of the Son of man. In this we have nothing to *arrange*, for this is already done by the prophet himself; we have simply to interpret; but then there is a difficulty compensating for this, for the language is symbolical. I do not say that in this particular vision there is much to perplex, for so much of it has been fulfilled that most of the difficulties have been cleared away; I give it merely as an instance of the greater difficulties which, previous to its fulfilment, would have attended it from the nature of its language. Let us look into the predictions themselves.

In the second chapter of Daniel occurs the first of them. It is the vision of a majestic image. Its head is of gold, and denotes the Babylonian empire, of which Nebuchadnezzar was the head, whose throne was in "the golden city," and with whom began the

“times of the Gentiles.” Then there are breast and arms, which were of silver, inferior to the first, the kingdom of the Medes and Persians. Then there are the belly and thighs of brass, a kingdom still inferior to the two former, the Macedonian. Then there are the legs of iron, and the feet of mingled iron and clay; this is the Roman empire, strong as iron, breaking all things in pieces that stood up against it. Such was that empire in its early days, in its Pagan state, at the first coming of Christ. It had not passed into the condition of the “feet and toes” of mingled clay and iron; that is, it was not then subdivided into ten kingdoms, and these entirely diverse and incongruous in their nature. For centuries after the first coming of Christ, it remained undivided in its strength. When the subdivision began, I do not now discuss. It is sufficient to say that there was no vestige of it for two or three centuries at least. And this is demonstration that the falling of the STONE upon it could not be the first coming of Christ; for that coming was not for destruction at all; and, moreover, the empire had not then attained its divided state, so that the stone could fall upon its feet and crush its clay-iron toes. Beyond all doubt, then, “the stone that smote the image upon its feet, breaking them in pieces, and then becoming a great mountain, filling the whole earth,” must refer to some event connected with the *second* coming of Christ; as it is written, “In the days of those kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed.” This is the termination of the

"times of the Gentiles," which began with the reign of Nebuchadnezzar; and such is a skeleton of the world's history from that day, till the coming of Christ, and the setting up of the better kingdom. It is an unbroken period of Gentile dominion and Jewish oppression till the day of the Son of man. It is obvious, then, that the Millennium or kingdom must be after the Advent, and not before it. There is no room for a thousand years' blessedness between the destruction of the Roman empire and the coming of the Lord, inasmuch as *that empire is to be destroyed by the Lord at His coming.*

Take another chronological prophecy, that of the seven trumpets in the Apocalypse. I do not here interpret, I merely sketch. The period occupied by these trumpets is not nearly so long as that of the former vision to which I have been referring. They take up a mere section of history, the commencement of which I do not undertake to determine. The first trumpet sounds, and fiery hail descends, mingled with blood. The second trumpet sounds, and the great mountain of fire is cast into the sea. The third angel sounds, and the great star falls from heaven, turning the waters into wormwood. The fourth angel sounds, and the sun, moon, and stars are smitten, so that the third part of them is darkened. The fifth angel sounds, and the bottomless pit is opened, and the locusts arise out of it to lay waste the earth. The sixth angel sounds, and the four angels bound in Euphrates are loosed for slaughter. The seventh trumpet sounds,



and the kingdoms of the earth become Christ's kingdom, and their many crowns are placed upon His head. This is the time of *judgment*, the time of *resurrection*, the time of recompense to the saints, as it is written, Rev. xi. 17—

“We give thee thanks,  
Lord God Almighty !  
Which art, and wast, and art to come,  
For thou hast taken to thee thy great power,  
And hast reigned !  
And the nations were angry,  
And thy wrath is come,  
And the time of the dead  
That they should be judged.”

In all this there is a distinct succession of events in chronological order from the sounding of the first trumpet to the coming of the Lord, the resurrection, and the kingdom. Where, then, is there room for a Millennium before this? How could it be thrust in between the sounding of the last trumpet and the Lord's coming?

Let us select a single specimen of discursive prophecies. They take up only sections or portions of history, and are to be regarded as *episodes* in the chronological prophecies. When we can ascertain their place in that chronology, or at least discover somewhat of their connexion and order, they of course possess the advantages of both kinds of prophecy. The following is such. It is the twenty-fourth chapter of Isaiah. It refers to the last scenes of this present age, which are immediately to precede the coming of the Lord, and

describes the state of earth in those days of darkness and tumult and error. The first ten verses describe the desolation which is to overwhelm the earth because of iniquity. In the midst of this overflowing wickedness, there is heard the voice of praise from a remnant in the distant isles, "Glory to the Righteous One." But this is drowned in the abounding iniquity, and the prophet thus proceeds:—

"The earth is utterly broken down,  
The earth is clean dissolved,  
The earth is moved exceedingly,  
The earth shall reel to and fro like a drunkard,  
And shall be removed like a cottage;  
For her iniquity lieth heavy upon her;  
And she shall fall and rise no more."

Such is the state of the earth as here described, a state which corresponds to that predicted by Peter in the third chapter of his Second Epistle. The conflagration which is to destroy the wicked and purify the soil, has, as it were, already taken hold of it, and accordingly the small remnant spoken of in verse 15, are said to glorify the Lord "in the fires." This proceeds till the earth is "clean dissolved,"—till the curse has been burned out of her, and she is ready for being the seat of the perfect kingdom. This chapter is a complete answer to the objection usually taken to the Pre-Millennial Advent from the conflagration mentioned in 2d Peter. Isaiah's picture of the dissolving earth is far more complete, universal, and minute than Peter's: his expressions also, denoting destruction,—utter destruction,—are far stronger, yet we find that during all

the time of this terrible catastrophe and conflagration, there is a people preserved alive upon the earth, a remnant who are kept from the danger, as well as a multitude on whom the judgments descend in overwhelming vengeance. The vision then proceeds :—

“And it shall come to pass in that day,  
Jehovah shall punish the host of the high ones that are on high,  
And the kings of the earth upon the earth.”

Here then is a twofold vengeance foretold ; first upon the host of the high ones that are on high—that is, the principalities and powers of darkness, the “prince of the power of the air,” and the spiritual wickednesses that are in “the high places.” Then comes the punishment of earth, its kings and its inhabitants, as elsewhere set forth in the second Psalm :—

“They shall be gathered together,  
As prisoners are gathered in the pit;  
They shall be shut up in the prison,  
And after many days shall they be visited.”

We recognise at once here the casting of the beast and false prophet into the lake of fire, as described in Rev. xix., and the binding of Satan as given in chap. xx. Isaiah says, “After many days shall they be visited ;” and John says, “When the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison.” But let us mark what takes place in the interval, that is, between their being cast into the pit and their being visited :—

“Then the moon shall be confounded,  
And the sun ashamed,  
When Jehovah of hosts shall reign  
In Mount Zion and in Jerusalem,  
And before his ancients gloriously.”

For we know what signs are to be in the heaven and in the earth, in the sun and moon and stars, in that great and notable day. And then comes the song of Israel or of the Church in the succeeding chapter, a song like that of Moses and Miriam after the destruction of Egypt and its chivalry, when they sank like lead in the mighty waters.

And after this song of exultation over their enemy, they strike the festal note ; a note in unison with that which they sing at the marriage-supper of the Lamb ; a song of festival ; a song of resurrection-joy and glory, in the presence of their God and King :—

“ In this mountain  
 Shall Jehovah make for all people  
 A feast of fat things.  
 . . . . .  
 And in this mountain  
 Shall he destroy  
 The face of the covering cast over all people,  
 And the vail that is spread over all nations.  
 He will swallow up death in victory ;  
 The Lord Jehovah shall wipe away tears  
 From off all faces ;  
 And the rebuke of his people shall he take  
 From off all the earth ;  
 For Jehovah hath spoken it.”

These specimens will furnish the reader with some idea of the true way in which prophecy should be studied. After constructing our prophetic chart, at least in so far as the general outlines are concerned, by means of the visions of Daniel, supplemented by those of John, we are then in the true position for viewing and understanding the isolated prophecies of Isaiah.

We shall find how much Daniel helps us to interpret Isaiah, and again how much Isaiah assists us in understanding Daniel. They assist mutually in arranging each other. Had all prophecies been chronological, our difficulties in the way of *interpretation* would have been greater than they are. Had all been discursive, our difficulties in the way of *arrangement* would have been considerably multiplied.

It would be useful to turn to Daniel's other visions ; but this would lead us into too large a field of exposition. I have given the outline of the first vision, and this may be regarded as the general calendar, comprehending all the rest. The other visions of this prophet, with the exception of that of the four beasts, which is identical with that of the image, as well as those of the Apocalypse, are just parts of this great outline on a larger scale. In them certain events are introduced separately, yet so as to be exactly fitted into this great outline. There is, however, a remarkable difference between the first and second vision of Daniel, to which it may be well to advert, because in any chronological sketch these two visions must go together ; the second being supplementary to the first. The first was delivered to a heathen monarch ; and in it we find little reference to the Church of Christ, till the very close : while in the second, the Church of Christ is introduced, and the things concerning it spoken of at length. Its peculiar history, as a little flock oppressed and afflicted, is painted, and the influence of the Gentile empires upon its history. In the first, the kingdoms were pre-

sented to Nebuchadnezzar, a worldly monarch, under the form of all that is most prized among men,—the gold, the silver, the brass, and the useful iron. In the second, they were shewn to Daniel, a prophet and a saint, under the emblem of fierce beasts of prey, to be dreaded, not to be admired ; because in this vision the oppression of the Church by these powers was the chief point to which his attention was to be directed. In the former, we have the mere prediction of a succession of monarchs who should occupy the earth before the kingdom of the Son of man ; but the peculiar features of each, and the brutal character of all, were not declared. These things shew us that there is no unmeaning repetition in these two visions, though they run through the same period ; and they account also for the trouble of soul into which the prophet was thrown by the appalling picture brought before his eyes of the suffering saints of the Most High.

The chief object of the second vision seems to be to set forth the oppression of the saints, and their final exaltation to that supremacy in the earth which their adversaries had held so long. The sufferings of the saints are not, however, directly introduced till the time of the fourth beast, when the little horn came up, a king diverse from the former king, “wearing out” the saints, and speaking great words against the Most High. The special end of the vision seems to be, to set forth the warfare between the saints and the little horn.

This power is exhibited as, both by subtlety and

might, doing his utmost to oppress and extirpate the saints, and as having power over them given to him, until the termination of the period there foreshewn. Then the destroyer of the Church and enemy of Israel is consumed by fiery judgment, and utterly destroyed by the coming of the Son of man. After this terrible adversary has been broken and annihilated, the saints enter upon the peaceful possession of their inheritance, and the whole earth has rest. The spoiler is spoiled; the city of confusion is confounded; the day of the Church's tribulation has passed away, and her triumph has begun. Till that day, however, we look for no Millennium; no day of peace. If these visions be true, oppression is to be the Church's lot on earth, till the Lord come. It is but the vanity of a fond fancy to count upon triumph, or even tranquillity, till He comes, who shall say to the wasting tempest, "Peace, be still!" It is unscriptural to hope till then, to "reform the face of the whole earth (I use the words of John Knox), which never was, nor yet shall be, till the righteous King and Judge appear for the restoration of all things."

Present times, indeed, are dark; but the better and the brighter are beyond. God's purposes are evolving, and the world's affairs are ripening to a crisis. Let shadows, then, darken as they may, we can look out from under them with calmness, and anticipate the glories of advancing day. The stone shall smite the image, and grind it to powder. The Man of Sin, the oppressor of the saints, he of the triple crown, shall not



long be able to maintain his seat in his fastness of old Rome ; and the Church, of which he calls himself the infallible head, though wondrously revived of late from the blow that had brought her to the dust, and though again “strumpet-dressed in the cast-off garments of Paganism,” shall be stripped naked, made desolate, and burnt with fire ; for “in her is found the blood of prophets, and of saints, and of all that have been slain upon the earth.”

I do not speak thus as if I believed that Popery is all the Antichrist we are to witness. There is one to arise out of it, more terrible in its strength and cruelty. Yet I can see many prophetic hints of their mysterious relationship to each other. The latter is to be the offspring of the former ; not a solitary tree shooting up from a root of its own, side by side with its fellow. It was Pagan Rome that gave birth to Papal Rome ; a more monstrous form of evil than its predecessor, yet receiving from her much of her outward form, and rite, and raiment, and seating herself in the same place of power. So out of Papal Rome is to arise Infidel Rome, darker, fiercer, and more Antichristian than she, yet with the same blood in her veins, retaining the same ancestral citadel of royal dominion, along with the principles, the features, the robes of her progenitor.

Such is the triple form of wickedness which the last of the four Gentile empires is to bring forth. There is first the “serpent’s root ;” then there is the “cockatrice ;” and, lastly, there is the “fiery flying-

serpent." (Isa. xiv. 29.) The last shall tower above the rest in suddenness of uprising, in potency of evil, in hatred of Christ, and in oppression of the saints: but not the less does he belong to that ancient stock of Belial, the princes of the seed-royal of hell. He is but a riper and more essential form of evil. "The child is father of the man." Owning and perhaps professing every form of religion, he shall yet be devoid of all. Building altars to every god, he "shall magnify himself above all gods." Acknowledging all creeds, he shall believe none. Covering the spectral nakedness of Atheism with the many-coloured vestments of every various priesthood, he shall stand up in the time of the end, the impersonation of all evil from the beginning, Satan's maturest form of wickedness, and truest image of himself, in moulding whom he has put forth all his skill, if so be that he might persuade the whole earth together to recognise as their king one who would rule more entirely as his vicegerent and representative than any heretofore, and through whom he might receive, what he has all along been laying claim to and striving to compass, the homage and obedience of the world, in defiance of Jehovah and His Anointed Son!

## CHAPTER X.

### DISTRIBUTION OF TIMES AND EVENTS.

IN connexion with the chronology of prophecy, a question occurs with reference to the length of the periods, and the distribution of events over them. As the first coming was the termination of a long series of predictions, so, as we have seen, is the second. It is in the midst of this latter series that we are placed, and it becomes a question of much importance, How are these predictions to be distributed over the intervening space? Are they to be spread out continuously over the whole interval, or reserved in one dense mass, for its close?

In apostolic days, when faith was simple and love was fresh, men could brook no delay. They could hardly admit of any time intervening between them and the object of their hope. In the fervency of their new affection, they would have the coming of the Lord to be immediate, without any interposing period or event. An apostle had to restrain them, by shewing them that that day should not come, unless there came "a falling away first, and that Man of Sin be revealed, the son of perdition." As time went on, men began to see that God had intended a greater interval than

they had imagined, and that many things were designed to take place which they had overlooked. There was no attempt indefinitely to postpone the Advent, nor was there any idea entertained of placing a whole millennium, and that a millennium of glory, between them and that day; still there was the belief that the intervening space was longer than at first they had conceived or were willing to allow.

Seeing this, they naturally began to reason, that if God had purposed that His Church should tarry so long for the day of Christ's appearing, He would not have left them without the "sure word of prophecy" as a light to them, shining in a dark place; and that therefore they must carry it along with them at every step, and spread it out over the whole period of the Church's tribulation, and the Bridegroom's delay. This we believe to have been the feeling in early times; and this we believe to be also the feeling in our own day. It is this, we doubt not, which, along with other reasons, has led the majority of interpreters to distribute over large periods the events and characters described in the prophetic word, and to spread out the "times" over ages and centuries.

In order to assist us in settling this point, we naturally inquire, What was God's method of procedure in former dispensations? How were the foretold events arranged? How were the prophetic times laid out in other ages of the Church? This seems to me a matter of some importance, and an element of some weight in helping us to settle the question; a question

doubtless attended with considerable difficulties, and not to be rashly and dogmatically pronounced upon, or hastily dismissed.

In former dispensations we find that the prophecies were not confined to the point immediately before the crisis, but stretched over a much larger field, generally taking up the most striking and pregnant events along the whole line. The times are not limited to a few years before the catastrophe, but range over a long period of years, sometimes of centuries. The Jewish Church was to be for a long period under Egyptian bondage, and prophecy foretold the whole of that time,—her four hundred and thirty years of oppression and sorrow. Her captivity in Babylon was to be for many years, and prophecy gave notice of the *whole* period of her exile, her seventy years of loneliness and absence from the beloved Jerusalem. The time intervening between her return from captivity and the coming of Messiah was to be a long one, and prophecy made known the whole of that interval, the seventy weeks that were “determined to finish the transgression and to make an end of sins, to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the Most Holy.”

Judging from such analogies, we should be led to expect that the interval between the first and second comings of the Lord should, to a certain extent, be *filled up* with the events and times of prophecy. Here is a strong presumption in favour of the more protracted scheme of interpretation. It cannot but appear strange and inconsistent that the prophetic page, which

in all other ages of the world had been *at length written over* with the Church's history, should all at once, for eighteen hundred years, become utterly blank, and that during a dispensation the most momentous which has yet evolved. These considerations would lead us to enter on New Testament prophecies with the expectation of finding them, like preceding ones, spread out over a considerable period, not crushed together in a point, and expending themselves exclusively upon the last few years of the Church's history before or at the Advent.

Besides, does it not appear as if the Apocalypse had been expressly written in order to fill up the interval between the First and Second Advents, which the Old Testament had left untouched or barely alluded to? Is it likely that the book given to the Church for the day of her tribulation, should yet bear no reference at all to by far the largest portion of that day? Are the visions and dates of that book not to commence till at least eighteen hundred years after it was put into the hands of the Church, as the "sure word" to which she was to give heed as unto "a light shining in a dark place?" I by no means say that even in such a case it would have been useless. It would be hazardous to affirm and difficult to maintain this. But we may at least say that it is not easy to see how it could be "the light in a dark place," if it had no reference at all to so long a period of the Church's history. And is not this confirmed by the words of Christ himself in the commencement of the book—"Write the things which

thou hast seen, and the things which are, and the things which are to be hereafter?" (Chap. i. 19.) "The things which thou hast seen" refer evidently to the vision of the heavenly glory just described. The "things which are" as evidently refer to the state of the seven Asiatic Churches as then existing. The "things which shall be hereafter," that is, after these others, refer to the state of things in the Church and world *following upon* the decay and ruin of these Churches. And with these last the remainder of the Apocalypse is occupied. If that verse, then, does give us the three divisions of the whole book, it seems difficult to conceive how the last of the three should take up only the few concluding years of the Church. If the "things that are" be really the condition of the seven Churches, then we should expect that as soon as these "things that are" have passed into the "things that were," the "things that shall be after these" should commence; and it is rather incongruous to interpose eighteen hundred years between the one and the other.

Further, there are some things foretold as taking place during the well-known period of twelve hundred and sixty days, which scarcely admit of being compressed within the space of so many days. The "wearing out" of the saints of the Most High is something which cannot be accomplished within three years and a half. It denotes a long period of trial, a gradual, continuous oppression of the Church, not the sharp and sudden infliction of calamity upon one gene-



ration of saints. It is true this expression occurs in Daniel, not in the Apocalypse, but the periods are the same, and the expressions made use of in the latter are of the very same import. Again, we read that the dead bodies of the witnesses are to lie unburied for three days and a half, (Rev. xi. 8-10,) that is, three and a half literal days, if the abridged scheme be correct. And then it is added, that "they of the people, and kindreds, and tongues, and nations, shall see their dead bodies, and shall not suffer them to be put in graves." Now, is it *possible*, that within three days and a half, people of the different nations even of the *prophetic* earth should be able to come together to the street of the great city, and see these bodies lying? Or is it possible, that within that short space the intelligence of their death should be so universally diffused, that men should have time to congratulate each other, and send gifts one to the other in token of their common joy? We can hardly conceive this possible.\*

In answer to all this, it is said, the word "day," which is used in several of these chronological prophecies, seems to favour the abbreviated system, if not expressly to establish it. I admit that there is force in this. But still it does not amount to proof. Nay, it falls considerably short of it. For it comes merely to this, that seeing the word "day" is used, it is likely that the literal day is meant. It cannot be said that

\* See also Rev. xvii. 12,—“They receive power as kings one HOUR with the beast.” Does this mean literally an hour, and no more?

it *must* be meant ; for, even had we no example at all of a day being the representative of a year, who would say that it might not be so with perfect propriety, especially in a symbolical prophecy ? It is to be noted that these periods occur in the symbolical prophecies, and in them alone, where great things are throughout set forth by small. The expressions also themselves would almost indicate that there was some mystery under them, requiring wisdom to discover it. For the words "time" and "times" are employed, not "year" and "years ;" and, instead of "half a year," the prophet speaks of the "dividing of a time." The term "years," both in Daniel and the Apocalypse, seems carefully avoided, as if on purpose to prevent us from understanding the words in their literal sense ; while in the more literal prophecies the word "year" is employed. It is no refutation of this to say that "day" and "days," which are the words used in the Revelation, preclude the idea of a lengthened period. For the term "day" is often used very indefinitely ; and if Daniel's expression "time" be a symbolical one, the other must also be so, for they refer to the same periods.

I do not take up the position that "day" *must* be symbolical. All I can speak of is the likelihood of its being so in these visions. Nor shall I enter at length upon a consideration of those passages which are generally adduced to prove this. For they only prove that the word is used elsewhere as the representative of a year, and therefore *may be* so in the Apocalypse. I

think, however, that the two passages, Numbers xiv. 33, 34, and Ezekiel iv. 4-6, do give much countenance to the interpretation. But the three which weigh most with me are Hosea vi. 2—"After two *days* will he revive us; in the third *day* he will raise us up;" where I do not see it possible to understand "days" literally: Rev. ii. 10—"Ye shall have tribulation ten *days*;" where the term seems to point to something more extended than the literal word implies: and Dan. ix. 24—"Seventy *weeks* are determined," &c.; where the expression is admitted by all to mean 490 years. In answer to the argument drawn from the last of these passages, it is said that the words "seventy weeks" are literally "seventy sevens," which may therefore be sevens either of days or of years. But in reply to this it may be confidently affirmed, that wherever the word stands alone, it signifies a week or weeks of days, and in no case whatever a week of years. Lexicographers always give it as a separate noun denoting a week, and Michaelis asserts that it can mean nothing but simple weeks.\*

Still, this proves nothing directly or positively. It does not settle the point before us, by shewing that in Daniel and the Revelation the word day is symbolical for year. It gives us scriptural authority for thus interpreting it, if the passage itself or the context demand it, but it does nothing more.

In proof of the literal meaning of days, it is affirmed, and strongly argued, that the fact of their commence-

\* Letters on the Seventy Weeks, pp. 32, 33.

ment being still an uncertain and disputed point, is sufficient to shew that they cannot yet have commenced. It is supposed, that had they begun, and, still more, had they terminated, and the events comprised in them been fulfilled, there would be no longer any room for doubt. The fulfilment would be so palpable as to declare itself. That this is plausible, and not altogether devoid of weight, I concede; but that it settles the matter I cannot admit. I point to the *fulfilled* prophetic times as a proof that this is a statement to be received with much caution. The commencement and termination of many periods, which have been long since fulfilled, are to this day uncertain. The time of the commencement of the Babylonish empire is uncertain; and so of some of the others. The precise date of the captivity and the return from it, are also uncertain. Even the commencement of the Egyptian bondage is surrounded with difficulties. It is certainly not the commencement which we should have expected. With reference to it one might easily argue, "It was predicted that Israel was to be oppressed in Egypt four hundred years; but Israel was not oppressed there for much above half that period; and to date the beginning of this from Abraham's going down to Egypt, is to take a commencement which does not accord with the prophecy." Yet there can be no doubt that those years did begin with Abraham's going down into Egypt, however unlike in some respects this may appear to the words of the prophecy. This is, I think, a sufficient answer to many of the arguments regarding

the Apocalyptic times and events. When it is maintained that these must be made so palpable by the fulfilment that they cannot be mistaken, I ask, was it so in regard to former times which are allowed to be fulfilled? Is it not still a matter of most earnest discussion, when the seventy weeks of Daniel commenced and concluded? Have there not been greater differences of opinion among commentators with regard to these than even with regard to later prophetic numbers? Yet who doubts that they are fulfilled? These remarks will, I think, tend to shew the weakness of some of the reasons commonly urged by a certain class of more recent interpreters who contend for the literal periods. At least they may help to moderate the precipitancy with which some are rushing to their conclusions respecting an unfulfilled Apocalypse. There are one or two other thoughts that suggest themselves in the way of objection to this system.

1. It maintains that Antichrist is *entirely Infidel* in his character and doings. This seems at variance with many passages, in which he is set forth as nominally a Christian, or at least an ecclesiastical power. I refer especially to the Apocalyptic predictions regarding him, which do not set him forth as avowedly and entirely Infidel, but under figures descriptive of an ecclesiastical apostasy. The harlot character so darkly painted in the Revelation, corresponds very fully to the similar character given of the apostasy of the Jewish Church in Ezekiel and Hosea. The Old Testament apostasy was not an entirely Infidel one, however much of thorough

Infidelity might be mingled with it ; so the New Testament apostasy will not be totally and exclusively Infidel, however much of Infidelity there may be mingled with it. The worst feature of the last days is having a “form of godliness, but denying the power thereof ;” and if this be the general characteristic of the times, it will, I believe, be exemplified more or less in Antichrist himself. To maintain from 1 John ii. 22, that he must be a bold and open denier of both the Father and the Son, is to overlook what immediately follows,—“Whoso denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father.”

2. It maintains that Popery cannot be Antichrist. Now, I shall not assert that the present form of Popery is the ultimate Antichristian apostasy. I believe it is to wax worse, and be pervaded more with a hellish mixture of Infidelity, which will immeasurably increase the deformity of its horrid features ; but still I believe that Popery is *the Antichrist of the day*. Every age has had, and will have, its peculiar form of Antichrist ; and I believe that Popery is that form just now. It is no answer to this to say that it is lacking in some of the predicted features of Antichrist. That may be true, and yet it may be no less true that he is the Antichrist of our age. The full-grown Antichrist of the last day will alone exhibit *every* feature in terrible minuteness ; but still many of the essential features of Antichrist, Popery has ; and every succeeding year, I may say, will continue to add to them. As Baxter remarks, “If the Pope be not Antichrist, he has ill luck to be so like him.”



3. It maintains that the Antichrist of the last day is a power rising up, unconnected with previous apostasies,—a power *per se*,—a lurid star kindled up in a moment, and placed in the firmament by the Prince of hell. Now, the Apostle John tells us that in his day there were many Antichrists. Paul tells us that the mystery of iniquity was already working. Each age was to develop more and more of the Antichristian element, till it reached its maturity in the last days. The last Antichrist is thoroughly identified with all his predecessors, not isolated from them. He and they are viewed as one mighty power of evil,—one gigantic apostasy, which has been gathering strength and size from age to age, till it has reached its perfect stature, and realised every feature of the full-grown man. For is it not said that “in her was found the blood of prophets, and of saints, and of all that have been slain upon the earth?”

Having offered these remarks, I would at the same time say, that I feel very strongly the difficulties connected with a *fulfilled Apocalypse*. I am by no means satisfied with any of those schemes that have been of late propounded. Nay, some of the most recent and most applauded will, I am persuaded, be found wanting. I stand still in doubt, waiting earnestly for further light. The scheme of an *unfulfilled Apocalypse* has many plausibilities, but many difficulties. Its expounders have as yet, at least, most palpably failed. It is now evident that they are divided among themselves, even more widely than those whom they condemn.



But the subject is worthy of our calmest thought and most protracted study. The mine is deep and rich ; let us not abandon it in despair. It will abundantly repay us for all our toil and cost. Each new exposition is contributing something to the work, either in exploding old errors or turning up new truth. And the day is advancing when God himself shall lift the veil, and pour light down into the deepest recesses of that book of mystery, till every verse shall not only sparkle like a new-polished gem, but give forth its radiance like a new-lighted star.

## CHAPTER XI.

### THE PROPHETIC STYLE.

WERE we to set ourselves down to frame conjectures as to what subjects we might expect to find in prophecy, we should be led into many extravagances. Each one would view the matter in a different light, and according to the relative importance of different events in his estimation, he would sketch his conjectural outline of what topics he thought likely to fill up the page of prophecy. If set to compile a history of the past, from the beginning of the world, according to our notions of what such a narrative ought to deal with, we should each form a different history, a different selection of facts, a different line of narrative. So, in prophecy, our ideas of what ought to be found there, would be widely diverse from each other; and as different from what we actually have in Scripture, as from each other.

Suppose that we were commencing the study of the prophetic oracles as a new and unknown book, it is of importance, before entering fairly upon it, to obtain some general idea, or even some loose hint, regarding the nature of the book, and the line of argument or narrative we might expect, as a sort of guide to

enable us to make good some footing upon the yet untrodden territory. As we reject all guidance which depends merely upon our own fancies, we must look to something else for assistance here. We turn, then, to the analogy of the past, as a more sober and trustworthy guide in this conjectural path. Taking our stand upon the scriptural narrative of the past, we may soberly endeavour to shape out a somewhat similar course in the history of the future, though in a very general way. Here we are upon lawful ground. If asked, then, to form a conjecture as to the probable subject of the prophetic oracles, we should say the likelihood is, that between the history of the future and of the past there will be a strong *general* analogy, a likeness between the subjects, between the selection of events, between the line of narrative, and between the style of both. We rise from sacred history, and we go to prophecy, expecting to find just a different part of the same general narrative, another page of the same volume.

What, then, do we find in Scripture history? Its grand subject is, the *corporate* history of the Church of Christ. We say corporate history, or history of the Church as a body; because, although we are presented with many individual characters, yet these are generally set before us as representatives of the Church at that period to which they belong; and the whole bearing of the narrative is upon the history of the Church as a body, its origin and progress, its different stages and dispensations, its straitenings and enlargings, and, above

all, its connexion with one mighty Personage, who is most mysteriously brought in at every turn, as the centre point round which all seems to revolve. This is the main stream of Scripture history ; but it is not the only one. We have, likewise, the history of the Church's enemies, or rather, in conformity with Scripture language, we should say "enemy;" as "the seed of the serpent," however numerous, is generally personified, and alluded to under the name of that nation or king who at any particular period happened to be at the head of the enemies of the Lord.

Turning, then, to prophecy, we should expect to find these same two streams flowing on through its pages,—the history of the Church as a body, and the history of the world as a body, in so far as the latter has any direct bearing upon the former. And so we do find it. There are some, indeed, who, in interpreting unfulfilled prophecy, set out with the principle that it is the history of the Church alone which we are to look for there ; and that, with the history of the world, prophecy has very little to do. Now, in opposition to this, I remark, that such an exclusive narrative could not be written. As well might you attempt to write the story of a battle, by relating the actions and achievements of one side alone. Grant that the prophetic vision is mainly of the Church ; yet the ground of the picture is the world ; its scenery is the world ; many of the personages represented must be of the world ; and therefore both must be thrown upon the canvas together. All Scripture history, and all pro-

phesy already fulfilled, establish this opinion. The first piece of *history* on record is the notice of the serpent (Gen. iii. 1.) There the history of our race may be properly said to begin. The first *prophecy* is of the *serpent* as well as the woman's seed. Tracing prophecy downward, we observe the same principle acted on. We need only cite the prophecies of Nineveh, Babylon, and Tyre, amid many that might be adduced. These are predictions regarding the Church's enemies. In accordance with this peculiarity of structure, we can trace a similiar peculiarity of style. Out of the parallel events in the *past* history of the two parties referred to, is constructed the language in which their *future* history is written; and many of the peculiarities of prophecy can only be fully explained by a minute reference to, and comparison of, these parallel events. Take, for instance, "the Assyrian," spoken of in Isaiah x. 5,—“Wo to the Assyrian, the rod of mine anger!” The literal Assyrian king is first introduced as the rod of Jehovah's anger against Israel; but scarcely has the prophet brought him before us, and briefly alluded to the chief occurrences of that period in which he was concerned, than he hurries us past the events of that age, and, under the name of “the Assyrian,” prophesies of his people's enemies, under all their manifold forms, as fit representatives of the pride, oppression, and irreligion of their first Assyrian head.

Take, as another example, “Edom,” and “Bozrah,” as alluded to in Isaiah lxiii. 1: “Who is this that cometh

from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah?" There the event predicted is evidently the second coming of Christ, or, rather, we should say, the appearance of Christ in behalf of His chosen people, after the destruction of the antichristian host. Edom is all along, both in history and prophecy, taken for the enemy of the Jewish Church, as Esau (who is Edom) was the enemy of Jacob; and Bozrah is the capital of Edom, or Idumea. Edom is the representative of the great apostate nation, who, disregarding the brotherly covenant, persecutes and seeks to destroy Jehovah's people; and Bozrah is the representative of the chief city of this persecuting power; the seat of Heaven's sorest judgment and selectest wrath, where there is the treading of "the wine-press of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God."

Take, again, Babylon, the name most frequently used in Scripture for the enemy of the Church in each successive age; the fullest, largest, and most significant type of this which Scripture affords us; round the very name of which are gathered images of gloom and grandeur, of glory and desolation, such as her imperial successor of the West has never yet paralleled. Babylon, the city of confusion, the seat of universal monarchy, the citadel of superstition and tyranny, the capital of Nimrod and Nebuchadnezzar, enemy of Jehovah, persecutor of His Church, raser of His temple, destroyer of His city, enslaver of His people! It was pitched as Satan's metropolis and temple, right against the city and temple of Jehovah; and for centuries God

permitted it to stand, as a type of His Church's future enemies, to furnish out of its name and history a name and language for them all. Then it was swept with the besom of destruction, tower and battlement, cornerstone and foundation, leaving no fragment of its existence behind it but the memory and name, that its desolation might afford materials for a language to the prophets, in picturing the ruin of a still mightier enemy to come. When God reared for himself again a people and a city in other lands, Satan again upreared his city in defiance, exchanging the Euphrates for the Tiber, the plain of Shinar for the seven hills of Latium. But to shew that this new enemy was one and the same with the ancient enemy of the East, He sent forth His prophets and apostles to inscribe upon the gates and walls of the new city, "Babylon the Great," thereby not merely identifying her with Babylon of old, but proclaiming how much she was to outdo her model in all for which she had been infamous. And now she stands before us at this day, true representative of her eastern progenitor, the mother of harlots, counterpart to the city of Semiramis, but a more relentless oppressor of the saints, darker prison-house of the Church, truer personification of the evil one, seat of fouler superstition than the Chaldean astrology, of more hateful idolatry than the worship of Bel and Nebo, city of more daring pride, saying, not merely, "I will ascend above the stars of God," but, "I will be above all that is called God, or that is worshipped: I will sit in the temple of God, shewing myself that I



am God ;” assuming all power above and below, changing times and laws, speaking great swelling words against the Most High, unpeopling earth of God’s chosen Israel, and peopling heaven with the sainted pandemonium of Rome !

From these instances we may obtain much insight into the method after which prophetic language is constructed. A proper attention to these parallel lines of prophecy in the history of the Church and the Church’s enemies, would enable us to discover, not merely the meaning, but the peculiar force and fitness of the historical allusions which are inwoven with all prophecy, and which constitute the basis of its language, the roots or *themata* of its vocabulary. We are not to content ourselves with knowing that such a name refers to the Church, and such another to her enemy, that Israel means God’s people, and the Assyrian means her persecutor. We must go closely to the particular events alluded to, and observe the exact condition of the Church, and the exact position of her enemy, at the time and in the circumstances to which allusion is made. For as each new name and period of the Church set her before us in a different posture, so do the corresponding name and period of her persecutor bring before us a new form of Satan’s hostility, a peculiar and distinctive feature of his enmity. And, moreover, as in the former we find the peculiar state of the Church at the time, so in the latter we have the peculiar judgment with which God, for her correction, saw fit to visit her, by letting loose the enmity

of that power with which she was brought into contact.

We see, then, how much prophecy partakes of the structure, characteristics, and especially of the language of history, and how a right interpretation of prophetic language depends much upon a right knowledge of the historical events which are wrought into its style with such curious art and delicacy of texture.

But it is maintained, that, even admitting the analogy between the structure and style of these two departments of Scripture, still prophecy is less definite and less regular in its composition than history. That there are some parts of prophecy of which this is true, I allow; but we can, on the other hand, point to many a portion of it where the details are as minutely brought out, and where the language is as precise and regular, as in any page of the most exact history. Take, for example, the prophecy of Moses regarding his nation, in the 28th chapter of Deuteronomy, in which their whole future history, from his own time down through all their captivity and sufferings, to the time of their restoration, is so minutely and distinctly predicted. Or read the 30th and 31st chapters of Jeremiah, which we may regard as the continuation, or filling up of the prophecy of Moses. It takes up the future story of the Jews at the very time when Moses breaks off—the period of their restoration to their own land from their long captivity. It points to a time of sore trouble still destined for Jacob, (xxx. 7,) out of which he is to be saved triumphantly, and after which

he shall return and serve David his king. It tells us that Jerusalem shall be "builded again upon her own heap," though of a new compass and extent, "from the tower of Hananeel unto the gate of the corner," and from "the hill Gareb compassing about to Goath," (xxx. 38.) All these events and circumstances it predicts as plainly and definitely as if narrating a past event which had taken place before the prophet's eyes. Many other instances, from Isaiah, Ezekiel, and the minor prophets, might be adduced to the same effect. We might say that at least one half of prophecy is of this definite character. It is not, then, essential to prophecy to be either indefinite or irregular. In other words, indefiniteness and irregularity are not *peculiarities* of the prophetic style. In so far as either of those characters may pertain to it, they do so only in common with other parts of Scripture.

Then, again, there are some who maintain that prophecy is necessarily obscure, if not altogether inexplicable. Their statement is, that figurative language being essential to its structure, obscurity must follow. In some parts, this, to a certain extent, may be the case; but I am well persuaded of two things: first, that there are many passages where the obscurity is ascribed to the figurative style, in which it can be plainly traced to other causes;—and, secondly, that many of the most highly figurative prophecies are as plain as if they contained no figure at all; nay, the very figure complained of fixes down the meaning with a plainness and precision which shews that its intention was not

to obscure, but to illustrate. I may allow that figures can be employed for the purpose of obscuring a subject; that this is their usual object, I deny. Their common use is to give force and beauty to the style.

The chief difference between literal and figurative language may perhaps be said to be the indefiniteness of the latter; such an indefiniteness, I mean, as does not at once, and by the very name of the word, suggest the one precise idea or object intended, as in such Hebraisms as the following, “cedars of God,” *i. e.*, mighty cedars,—“son of the burning coal,” *i. e.*, a spark,—“eyelids of the morning,” *i. e.*, dawn. Such figures or paraphrastic expressions, of which all language originally consisted, may to a certain extent be charged with ambiguity, till by familiar usage, or by the substitution of *one* word to express them, they have established themselves in the dialect and ideas of a nation. They may be called indefinite, till common use has stripped them of all but the precise idea intended, has sunk them to the level, and stiffened them into the cold precision of ordinary diction. But then, such an indefiniteness can only be called obscurity when there is no key to the exact meaning; for wherever by any hints of the author, or by the position in which the words occur, their significance becomes plain; then their very indefiniteness ennobles and adorns the composition, fitting them especially for embodying the sublimity and splendour of prophetic visions, which language less elastic and expansible could not have grasped. A great deal of obscurity has

been ascribed to the prophets which does not really belong to them, and much that is both unmeaning and untrue has been spoken about the "necessary obscurity of figurative language." The remarks just made will shew the incorrectness of such an assertion, and that figures are generally used for the very purpose of strengthening the style, and conveying the sentiments intended, with more exactness of description and more vividness of colouring. As one illustration, take any two prophecies upon the same subject, the one figurative, and the other literal, and see whether the one be less plain than the other. Look at the two predictions in Ezekiel regarding the future condition of the Jewish nation, the one figurative, in chap. xxxiv. 11-29, the other literal, chap. xxxvi. 27; read them together, and see if the figure of the one throws over it a mystery from which the other is free.

What liberties do some interpreters take with the prophetic word! They find in every page almost what they call figurative language, and, under this idea, they explain away whole chapters without scruple or remorse. They complain much of the obscurity of the prophetic language. It is an obscurity, however, of their own creating. If they will force figures upon the prophets when they are manifestly speaking with all plainness and literality, no wonder that darkness and mystery seem to brood over the prophetic page. The truth is, there is less figure and more literality in Scripture than many will allow; and, as a general rule for its interpretation, I know not a safer one than that

we are to interpret literally until cause be shewn for our departing from it. The literal is the basis of the figurative, and the key to its translation. The former is the rule, the latter the exception. Proceeding, then, upon this principle, that we must take all as literal till we are forced from it by something inconsistent or absurd, we shall find a far smoother and straighter way through the fields of prophecy than most men will believe. If we take the waters as we find them, we shall enjoy them clear and fresh; but if we will always be searching for some fancied figure at the bottom, or casting in one when we do not readily discover it, we need not be astonished nor complain that the stream is turbid and impure.

How plain, for instance, is that description in Isaiah xi. 6-9, of the blessed condition of the renovated earth, and the share which even the lower creation is to have in this glad event! How can any one reading it not call to mind the peace of Eden, with all its rejoicing creatures, brought back to the harmony and happiness of their primeval being, or fail to contrast with that condition, thus foretold, the miserable state in which the apostle paints them, when he tells us that "the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now?" Who, in reading this plain prophecy, can fail to realise the time when Eden and its scenes shall revisit the earth; and when, as once, beneath its overshadowing verdure, the new-born creatures took their pastime, and tasted their sinless enjoyment; so again, beneath the shadow of that "Branch



which is to grow out of the root of Jesse," "the wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid, and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together, and a little child shall lead them?" Yet even this plain passage has been subjected to an allegorising process, in order to compel it to yield another meaning. It is said to signify the harmony which will one day subsist between men of the most turbulent passions and discordant dispositions! When we ask, with astonishment, if words so definite and simple *can* have such a meaning, we are told that it is a far more noble and sublime idea that men of evil passions should be softened, than that the beasts of the field should become harmonious in their natures! It may be so. It may be a sublime meaning, but it will be difficult to prove it to be *the* meaning of the passage. Attempts of this kind to bring out a "spiritual and sublime meaning" from language so plainly literal, destroy the simplicity of Scripture. Instead of elevating, they degrade it, and, moreover, cast over it an air of puerility and feebleness which are ill redeemed by the fancied "sublimity" of the idea extorted from its imaginary figures.

We see, then, that as figurative language is not necessarily obscure, but the reverse, the charge of obscurity brought by some against all figurative prophecy is unfounded. Nay, further, the mystery complained of is generally one of their own creating; and the true cause of their finding so much darkness in that which an apostle calls "a light in a dark place," is



their peculiar way of forcing a figure upon every chapter or verse where by any possibility they can manage to do so. They proceed upon the principle that prophecy is not to be brought under the rule of interpretation adopted with regard to the other parts of Scripture, but to be considered as almost universally figurative, with occasional but rare exceptions. Now, we maintain that prophecy is to be interpreted upon the same *general* principles as we apply to the other books of inspiration, and that with it, as with the rest, we are to set out with this simple rule—"literal, if possible."

But are we not to be allowed to spiritualise prophecy? In so far as we understand the meaning of this vague expression, we answer, undoubtedly. We may spiritualise prophecy *in the same way and to the same extent* as we spiritualise history, but no further. In this respect we maintain that prophecy and history stand not merely on an analogous, but on precisely the same footing. The history of the future is to be made available in the same way as the history of the past. To spiritualise history is perfectly allowable, nay, highly profitable, *provided you have first interpreted it*, but not before. So, to spiritualise prophecy is most proper, most profitable, *after you have interpreted it*, but not before. Many seem to think *that spiritualising is interpreting*. I cannot think so. To adopt, or at least to carry out such a system, would soon land us in the dreams of Origen, if not in the wild mysticism of Behmen or Swedenborg. As an instance in point, let me refer to Dr Chalmers's noble sermon on "The New

Heavens and New Earth.” The words of his text are those of the apostle Peter, in his second epistle. “We, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.” A common reader would at once gather from these words the idea which the writer most eloquently and conclusively demonstrates to be the true one, that in the future state there is to be a material earth for our material bodies. Some, however, by means of the spiritualising process we have just described, have endeavoured to extract a meaning by which all reference to materialism is avoided. In the sermon referred to, the writer very graphically depicts, and in the very depicting refutes most effectually, this spiritual meaning. The idea of these interpreters regarding man’s future state is described to be “that of a lofty, ærial region, where the inmates float in ether, or are mysteriously suspended upon nothing !” And while one class of these interpreters would thus explain away the words “earth and heavens,” another, not going so far, would yet stumble on the epithet “new,” maintaining that it must mean a different globe altogether, forgetting that Scripture speaks also of a “new man,” thereby meaning, not a different man, but the same man made new; not one individual annihilated and replaced by another, but the same man made new; the same individual fashioned aright and purified.

We freely consent that prophecy should be spiritualised, that is, should be made to give forth a spiritual utterance; and not prophecy only, but the whole Bible.

Only we would first *interpret* it. Now here is the point at which so many stumble. They confound *spiritualising* with *interpreting* Scripture. They think that when they have contrived to wedge in a spiritual observation (often by main force) between every verse or clause, they have succeeded in explaining it. It will generally be found that those who so spiritualise Scripture do little else than *graft* their own ideas upon it, instead of gathering the meaning of the Spirit from it, they force a sense into it, instead of drawing one out of it. Every verse, from Genesis to Revelation, may be spiritualised, and yet not one be interpreted.\*

Such expositors are in the habit of using the term "spiritual" as synonymous with "figurative," and as a contrast to "literal." Now, a moment's thought will shew any one that a literal interpretation may be as spiritual as any other. The fifty-third chapter of Isaiah is one of the most literal of all prophecies, yet one of the most spiritual of all. The opposition is not between spiritual and figurative, but between figurative and literal; spiritual is distinct from both, and in addition to both. It may be based upon either, but

\* Jerome's commentaries exhibit many a singular specimen of the above-mentioned plan of exposition. Yet fanciful as he generally shews himself, there are some places in which he betrays his want of confidence in this system, and his approval of something more literal. I quote the following passage from his remarks on Jer. xix. 10 :—"Quamquam sibi Judæi auream atque gemmatam Hierusalem restituendam putent, rursumque victimas et sacrificia et conjugia sanctorum, et regnum in terris Domini Salvatoris; quæ licet non sequamur tamen damnare non possumus, quia multa ecclesiasticorum virorum et martyres ista dixerunt."—*Opera*, vol iv. p. 272.

it cannot be called a language by itself. We cannot admit such a thing as a spiritual style; we claim for prophecy just two styles, the literal and the figurative, including in the latter, of course, the symbolical. The literal is the basis of the whole. The figurative rises out of the literal, and the symbolical rises out of the figurative, and seems but a higher degree of it; and as the literal is the basis of the figurative, so it is the key to its explanation. From the literal we see the way in which what was once figurative sank to the level of the literal, and how what is at present figurative rose above that level. We have in the literal a standard by which we can measure and calculate the variations of language. In the figurative we have the first step above the former, the index of the variable quality; and from these data we can proceed to estimate all the rest.

We have gained another step, then, in our investigation into the structure of the prophetic style; viz., that spiritualisation is not a peculiarity of prophecy, but belongs to it only in common with all the other parts of Scripture. Now, it is of vast importance to shew that this is not peculiar to the prophecies, because they must thus fall to be dealt with in the same way as the other books of inspiration, and to be interpreted upon the same principles. This will much lessen our difficulties, and clear away a mass of confusion which the opposite idea had heaped up as an almost impassable obstacle in the way of prophetic students. As Lucké well observes, in his book upon the Apocalypse,

“The interpretation of the Apocalypse proceeds essentially upon the same hermeneutic principles whereon the interpretation of the other books of the New Testament proceeds. There is no peculiarity of the Apocalypse obvious and noticeable, whereby the generally sufficient fundamental laws of New Testament interpretation can become essentially changed or taken away.” To this we would add, that, as prophecy is to be dealt with in the way of *criticism* as the rest of Scripture is dealt with, so also it is to be dealt with in the way of *exposition*. All its minute clauses and phrases are to be as closely sifted and precisely expounded as are the minuter expressions of other parts of the Divine record.

If these remarks be received and proceeded on, they will go far to overthrow the loose ideas which many entertain of the prophecies, that as they are written in the highest style of poetry, and with the boldest figures, therefore we are not to apply to them the more exact principle of interpretation, but must make considerable allowance and deduction for the largeness of *poetical* licence, and the laxity of *poetical* diction.

Such a view of prophetic Scripture is low indeed. It is a low view even of uninspired poetry, to speak of it as either needing or adopting such a licence ; and any one who has read Milton, for instance, as he ought to be read, would reject such an idea as an insult to that mighty name, well knowing what an exactness of truth there is preserved in every accidental figure and

allusion, what fulness of meaning there is condensed into every expression, and that it is only the careless reader that finds anything superfluous or needing to be accounted for by the idea of poetical licence. It is, we say, a low view even of uninspired poetry, to regard it otherwise than as a finer mould of truth ; but to speak of such a licence as practised by the prophets, is a most degrading view of inspiration, a most irreverent charge brought against the Word of "the God only wise." The rich language, and the exuberant imagery of prophecy are not to take their place in the rank of loose metaphor and bold hyperbole. *There*, human language labours for words of fit dimension to contain, and of worthy form to set forth, the conceptions of the Infinite Mind.

The figures of the prophets are not disposed of according to the taste or fancy of the writer ; but they are the fittest, fullest, exactest forms for containing and conveying Divine truth to man. They may be ornamental, but they are far more than this. They are not like Gothic projections which adorn but do not strengthen the fabric ; they are like the pillars of Grecian architecture, for support and strength even more than for beauty.

According to this low view, whole sections of Scripture may be read without any exact meaning being affixed to them. The last eight chapters of Ezekiel are explained by many so as to bring out nothing but one idea, viz., that the Christian Church was to be perfect in all its parts, just as the "fictitious" temple



described by the prophet, was exact and complete. As well might they say that the various rules of measurement given us by Moses, are only intended to tell us that the Jewish Church was perfect in *its* kind. Those to whom God has given some reverence for His Word, and who look with awe upon its every jot and tittle as more solid and enduring than the everlasting heavens, will be afraid to deal with it so lightly. Those who, amid the multitude of human works and human words, have been accustomed to prize God's Word, and to search for it as for gold among the sand, will count its every particle sacred and precious. If they understand it not, they will prize it still, and hold it fast till God send them a teacher in His own time, which He is never unwilling to do.

But how are we to obtain the proper insight into these figures, and how are we to open out all their fullness of meaning? The first thing to be done for this end, is to examine the *materials* out of which they are constructed. The figures of common language are formed out of the objects with which we are brought usually into contact, just as words themselves were originally figures taken from the different objects of nature. But the language of Scripture, especially of prophecy, is of a more hallowed texture; it, no doubt, in part consists of the common forms of language, but there is wrought into it much of more sacred materials. The objects with which the prophets were brought into contact were of a peculiar nature, and their style, of course, especially its more figurative parts, almost entirely



took its form and colouring from these peculiar objects. Even common objects, being always presented to them in a peculiar light, and in a peculiar connexion, entered into the composition of their style in a peculiar way, and carrying along with them their peculiar associations.

It is to the facts and events of Scripture history, the characters of Scripture personages, the records of Scripture places and nations, the rites and ceremonies of Scripture worship, that we are to look for the storehouse out of which the prophets drew their figures and symbols; and by these we must interpret all their peculiarities of style. To the events of Providence and the services of the sanctuary, under the Jewish economy, the prophets seem to resort as furnishing materials for the only language through which they could adequately express themselves. They appropriate Jewish words and allusions; they embody Jewish history and ordinances in their style, and thereby construct to themselves a peculiar language—a rich and noble dialect—the fullest and most beautiful, the exactest and most expressive that mortal has ever attained to. The language of heathen poets has been lauded as exquisite; and we deny not that it is worthy of uninspired men; but it is poverty and meagreness in comparison with this. And why? Not merely because they were uninspired men and pagans, but because they wanted the rich materials to which the prophets had access. Their language embodied merely the common events of life, the common objects of nature, and the fables of a puerile and unclean mytho-

logy. The prophets had all natural objects and events to resort to and draw from, but they had more. They had the history and the ordinances of God's people ; which history seems to have been recorded, and which ordinances seem to have been constructed, with the design of furnishing materials for a language to the prophets of Jehovah, by which they were enabled to express ideas, and declare events, which in no other way they could have succeeded in making known. More especially we would say this of the Apocalypse, which, being the latest book of prophecy, has the advantage of all others in this respect. It is written throughout in the language of the Old Testament, both historical and prophetical. All the Jewish ordinances are there, and all Jewish history. It seems as if the whole fabric of the old dispensation had been taken to pieces after it had served its time, in order to have its different parts applied to the building of another and more stately edifice, in combination with new materials. Its worship, its feasts, its sacrifices, its altar, its sanctuary, its high priests, its outer and inner courts, its times and seasons, are all transplanted here. The history of God's ancient people, their Egyptian bondage, their desert sojournings, their possession of Canaan, their capture of its cities, their imprisonment in Babylon, are gathered together, to build up the prophet's style ; all sought out from their various places, and, with exquisite art and care, polished and perfected, so as to form themselves into one harmonious composition, one splendid mosaic, from which the various ideas of the

Divine mind, and the various events of futurity, might fitly be reflected to the eye of man.

The whole fashion and texture of the book are Jewish. Its style, its structure, its scenery, are Jewish. Its scenes are laid in Palestine, in the holy city and temple. Each prophetic vista is hung with Jewish drapery, and all the light is transmitted through Jewish transparencies from the seven-branched lamp of the holy place. The scene shifts from the outer court of the temple with its worshipping crowds, to the inner court with its priests and incense-altar; and from the inner court to the Holy of Holies, trodden by the solitary high priest, and filled with the Shekinah glory. We have the redemption of the inheritance, the trumpets of jubilee and judgment, the sealed tribes, the feast of first fruits, the palms of the feast of tabernacles. These are not mere names. They are all introduced with consummate art. They are so inserted, as on the one hand to serve as links joining together the different parts of the book in exact order, suggesting time, locality, and connexion; and, on the other, as hooks whereon to fasten the events which form the antitypes, and which thus by the mere mention of the type are fully embodied in the prophecy.

As one example of this style in the Apocalypse, we may take the fifth and sixth chapters, where "the sealed book" is brought in. A common reader would be content with taking the word "sealed" in its usual acceptation of "closed up," and the whole vision as meaning merely that Christ was the opener of the

events to His Church. But a reader aware of the peculiar style of the book, would at once go back for an interpretation of the symbol, to Jewish rites and history. Knowing the exactness of each symbol, he would conclude, in the first place, that Christ being presented to us as *the Lamb*, is not to be regarded in the character of revealer, but in that of Redeemer. The prologue to the vision, as given us in the fifth chapter, and especially verses nine and ten, confirms this. There the Church in heaven is represented as rejoicing in the prospect of the Lamb's taking the book and opening it, as an action preparatory to, and an earnest of, the redemption of the inheritance of the earth. Then we find that the "sealed book" was, among the Jews, the sign of an inheritance, mortgaged by its owner, but not alienated. Christ, appearing here, therefore, with the seven-sealed book, must be regarded in the character of Redeemer of the inheritance, according to the ordinance of the goel, or redeemer, as described in Leviticus (chap. xxv.), and exemplified in the Book of Ruth, and in Jeremiah (chap. xxxii.) The opening of the seals is the action of Christ as Redeemer, appearing with the title-deeds of the inheritance, to dispossess the usurper, and reclaim the inheritance for those to whom He stands in the relation of Redeemer. The seals are, as it were, the bonds upon the estate; and as they are opened one by one, blow after blow comes down upon the usurper, till the spoilers of the earth are spoiled, the inheritance is redeemed, and Christ "takes to Himself His great power and reigns."

Connected with these remarks, we would also notice not merely the materials thus collected, and the sources from which they are drawn together; but the exact and appropriate distribution and arrangement of these. Each scene has its appropriate figures, modelled according to the characteristic features of that scene. To illustrate our meaning, let us take Ezekiel's prophecy of Tyre, at least that part of it embraced by the 27th chapter. Tyre was a commercial city "the merchant of the people for many isles;" and, therefore, in the prophecy regarding her, she is spoken of as a ship, and the various imagery of the prophet is arranged accordingly, and can only be rightly understood by adverting to this idea. As such she is described in most glowing language. Her structure is perfect; her timbers are of the fir-trees of Senir; her masts of the cedars of Lebanon; her oars of the oaks of Bashan; her benches of the ivory of Chittim; her sails of the fine linen of Egypt; her awning of blue and purple from the isles of Greece; the chief maritime cities furnish her with seamen; her own sages are her pilots; all nations, near and far, pour in their produce, of various kind, from every various clime. Unrivalled in power and wealth, she floats before us the mistress of the seas! Around her are gathered the tributary fleets from a thousand shores, loading her with all goodly merchandise; the sea is peaceful; the winds are at rest; her moorings are fast; the splendour of sunshine is over her; "she is replenished and made glorious in the midst of the seas." In a moment the scene changes,

and the stately vessel is seen far from her safe anchorage and out at sea; her rowers, filled with the mad love of change, hurry her out into the "great waters" to taste the fancied freedom of the deep; the storm drives over her, the east wind comes up against her, and she is a wreck! The cry of her pilots is heard afar off, and multitudes crowd the shores, gazing on the sudden wreck, and bewailing her calamity. With all her merchandise within her, with all her pomp about her, she goes down in the mighty waters, amid the wailing of those that stand upon the shore, lamenting and saying, "What desolation is like Tyrus, like the desolation in the midst of the sea!"

What an appropriate assemblage of figures; what completeness of painting; what unity of design! Nor is this last illustration at all inconsistent with the preceding remarks, that the imagery of the prophets is Jewish. They are perfectly consistent with each other. The language regarding Tyre is still Jewish language, shaping itself according to the situation and circumstances of the people addressed. The materials of the web are still Jewish, though the embroidery is Tyrian; the coinage is still of the fine gold of the sanctuary, though the image and superscription may be struck according to the event or nation which they are intended to symbolise.

The last point upon this subject which I would notice, is what may be called the *filling up* of prophetic language; a point of vast importance, and the only key to the solution of many of those difficulties



which have perplexed the students of Scripture. The structure of prophetic language is of such a kind as that, while describing some more particular and immediate scene, it is capable of expanding to such a compass as to embrace far more extensive scenes of a kindred nature. By this peculiarity, which must at once strike every reader, the mind is continually forced away from the immediate scene, onward to other events, capable of *filling up* the language to its full and natural extent. The way in which the Spirit has thought fit to present to us the events which prophecy predicts, is different from what many would have expected. Yet it is the fullest and most perfect which could be devised, affording all needful minuteness, yet saving all unnecessary repetition. Single events are not predicted by themselves, but kindred events are *classified*; not according to time, but to similarity of character and issue. The prophet does not stand full in front of a long line of events, and describe them one by one; but he takes his place at the commencing point of a whole series which are stretched lengthways before him, like a long mountain-range. Placed at this point, and looking along the line, he sees event after event rising above each other. He sets out with describing the first of this range,—that which lies immediately at his feet; he dwells more minutely upon this, as one who, before taking the measurement of the rest, would fix his line firmly in the first; while at the same time he takes care to employ such language, and throw in such imagery, as can only be properly applied to the *last*.



The reason of this is very obvious. To a certain extent all these kindred events are the same, and, in describing the first, he strikes off the main features of the rest. All that remains after this, is to bring out that wherein they differ, and wherein the one exceeds the other. In the first event, the initial and fluxionary sign is given, by which all the rest may be calculated. The description of the first makes known the *genus*; those parts of it which cannot be applied to the first, point out to us the *species* of the others. By means of this exquisite art and Divine wisdom, the prophecy suits all ages; every successive generation can say that it does apply in a certain degree to it; though all can see that its fulness of accomplishment—the summation of the whole series—is reserved for the last days.

The prophecies of the Messiah furnish us with a specimen of such progressive prophecy. Each successive age more fully developed the character under which, and the purpose for which, He had been from the first made known, and more fully filled up the language of all prophecy regarding Him. Yet, hereafter, in the day of His glorious manifestation, shall we behold the yet fuller accomplishment of all. Then shall He whom our first father heard of as the Seed of the woman; whom Enoch foretold as the Avenger; whom Job knew as the Redeemer; whom Abraham rejoiced in as the Promiser; whom Jacob trusted in as the Angel of the Covenant; whom Balaam spoke of as the Star of Jacob; whom Joshua worshipped as the Captain of the Host; whom David sung of in his “last words,” as “the

pleasant theme of the Psalms of Israel ;” whom Solomon typified as the Prince of Peace ; whom Pilate crucified as “ the King of the Jews ;” whom John wrote of as “ the Word,” and of whom he prophesied as “ the First and the Last, the Root and the Offspring of David, the Bright and Morning Star :” then, we say, shall He,—the Messiah, Jesus of Nazareth,—shew forth the fullness of these characteristics, and, recapitulating all of them into Himself, fully make good and manifest His claim to each.

Again, the predictions regarding Babylon present us with a like specimen. The prophet sets out with describing literal Babylon, as if to affix that as the family name to the whole line of kindred objects which were to be foretold. As he proceeds in his description, his language swells, his imagery enlarges, till his eye is withdrawn from the literal city, and led forward to its kindred successors,—from Babylon literal, to Babylon mystical ; passing from Pagan to Papal, from Papal to Infidel Rome.

Each age has been contributing its events to fill up the moulds of these prophetic symbols and figures ; but they are not yet full. To shew us that they are not, John, in his last prophecy, was commissioned to take up the theme, and present to us in prospect the more terrible fulfilment of all. He retains the family name, but he invests it with images of deeper gloom. He takes up and embodies the imagery of the old prophets, in their descriptions of the ancient Babylon. He traverses all history for materials ; and, after recapitulating

and condensing in one awful scene the various burdens of Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel; after, like some master of his instrument, running through the diapason of prophecy complete, he sums up the whole with joyful thanksgiving for the mighty deliverance, as if to signify that now, at last, the burdens of prophetic judgment were filled up and accomplished. In a moment we feel as if relieved from an oppressive sense of terror, and listen with joy to the voice of solemn praise, as it rises from the multitude, like notes of jubilee—the *Nunc dimittis* of a worn-out world, the song of completed conquest and commencing triumph—“Alleluia! for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth. Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to Him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and His wife hath made herself ready.”

I must not, however, protract the subject. It admits of very wide and various illustration, and is worthy of being far more thoroughly investigated than has yet been done. Whether in our mechanical and restless age there may not be many hindrances, many things unfitting us, both morally and spiritually, for appreciating the peculiarities of the prophetic style, and entering with kindred sympathies into its deep fulness of meaning, I shall not undertake to say. Certainly the tendencies of the age are not with us. Its current runs against us. Even its deeper and more thoughtful literature is but poorly helpful. Its mould is unsuitable. The German style of thought is now widely leavening both Britain and America; and the

issue of this is matter for suspicion and fear, in so far as pure Bible exposition is concerned. It is a style entirely self-revolving, in which, as one of their poets has described it, the soul is

“ Chasing *its own dream* for ever,  
On through many a distant star ;”

turning in upon its own actings, instead of out upon God's ; making man's interior self the great region of research, not God's manifested self ; dealing with spiritual truths as with abstractions or ideas, not as connected with Divine personality and life.

In spite of all the admiration in which it is fashionable to hold German critics, and with the full admission that their researches have not been unrewarded, their system of criticism, as a whole, cannot but be regarded as a failure, if not something worse. Its results have been inconsiderable for good, but vast for evil. Dwelling in the region of their own thoughts, they have lost the power to grasp, and the taste to appreciate the thoughts of God. They may be interpreters of words, but they are not expounders of thought, in so far as Scripture is concerned. In the former they excel, in the latter they fail. They have not brought forth the fulness, the richness, the vastness of Scripture language ; they have rather diluted and emptied it. They have taken their own thoughts as their standard in measuring, their law in interpreting the thoughts of God. Hence, in prophecy, where the language is doubly pregnant with the thoughts and purposes of God, they have totally broken down.

Few of their works on prophecy are possessed of much value beyond that of verbal criticism. And it is sad to see their American imitators rapidly coming up to them, if not outstripping them, in the race of irreverence and error.

It is the deep digger into Scripture that is its best interpreter. It is the man who, in studying God's Word, and entering into His mighty thoughts, is becoming more entirely assimilated to God himself; it is he who alone is able fully to expound His Word, especially in its prophetic revelations. The nearer we come to think as God thinks, to feel as God feels, to view all things from the point from which He shewed them to His prophets, the more shall we understand the prophetic visions, and appreciate the prophetic style. To catch up the exact notes of the prophetic harp, to survey with understanding the prophetic picture, needs no depth of self-revolving thought, no exuberant redundancy of classic lore. It needs but a more entire assimilation of soul to the mind of God. It needs but a nicer spiritual ear, a truer spiritual taste, and a finer spiritual eye.

## CHAPTER XII.

### THE TYPES.

THERE are strange *parallelisms* in the different kinds of truth, which, the more they are searched into, surprise us the more, alike by their beauty and their exactness. Each separate order of truth seems to have its separate orbit, yet all have but one centre. One mind, one purpose, one law, one principle, may be traced throughout them all. The different orders of truth displayed in the inanimate, the animate, the sentient, the intelligent creation, are instances of what we mean. They are very widely different from each other, yet they present innumerable points of curious coincidence, and connexion, and likeness. They form so many separate strata, superimposed upon each other, most diverse in structure and formation, yet full of resemblances and indentations the one into the other.

Man's course is between two of these parallel strata. He walks upon the uppermost of the *material*, but under the lowest of the *immaterial*. All the former are under his feet; all the latter are above or within him. All that is beneath him—the visible, the tangible, the sensible—he can grasp, he can name, he can point to, he can discourse of, easily and directly. No

intricate process needs to be resorted to ; no complex sign is to be invented. There is nothing required but an equation of the simplest kind. At the most, it is but the adding or subtracting of similar or kindred facts. The earth, the sea, the hills, the woods, the rivers—these are some of the objects of the material strata, which can be easily grasped, and named, and spoken of, by simple signs. The addition or subtraction of certain facts observed in each, enables us to speak of them in whole or in part, according as we desire. If I speak of the sea, I use a word expressive of certain visible or tangible properties observable in the object. If I speak of the Sea of Galilee, I use a word which expresses the subtraction of certain parts from the former object. If I speak of a wave, I use a word which is founded upon the observation of a still greater subtraction from the parts or properties of the original object. All this is so far simple. It is merely the understanding, finding, or inventing a sign for what the senses have observed, and that sign not an arbitrary one, but naturally suggested by the objects themselves. The contact of our senses with these objects has set us a-thinking about them ; and our desire to remember, register, and communicate these thoughts has led us to devise these primary and simple signs, expressive of the material objects around us.

But all this merely refers to what we have called the lower and material strata of things, on the surface of which man is walking. He has, however, something more to arrest his eye, and occupy his thoughts,



and exercise his invention. There is a vast, an infinite world above and within him, and this world is all immaterial and impalpable. It is altogether different from the former. It is not less real or true; but then it cannot be grasped nor observed by any of his senses. It is far more mysterious and incomprehensible, approaching very near, nay, surrounding him at every point, yet stretching up and away into infinite heights, unsearchable recesses, and unfathomable depths. In thinking and speaking of this inner and upper world, he is brought to a stand. It is so vast, so glorious, so real, yet so inaccessible and so impalpable. In the former case, that of the world beneath his feet, he was like one grasping some sand upon the sea-shore; a thing easily and simply done. In this, however, he is like one attempting to grasp the mighty rock, whose broad base that sand is circling; or rather, we might say, like one seeking to lay hold of the thin mist or thinner air. What is he to do? How is he to fasten his thoughts upon these immaterial objects, so as to lay hold of them, understand them, speak of them, record them and his own thoughts regarding them? Direct signs are impossible, for these objects are silent and intangible. They and the senses do not come into direct contact, and hold no immediate communication together.

An interpreter is needed. He must have some instrument by which he can fix his thoughts upon this solid rock,—some wedge which he can force into its crevices to detach fragments for his use,—something to

enable him to understand, to grasp, and speak of this immaterial world with which he is compassed about.

As he passes along between the two parallel strata of truth,—the one beneath his feet and quite intelligible, the other above his head and altogether mysterious and incomprehensible,—he perceives that at certain points these two separate strata touch each other, and are, in a considerable degree, assimilated to each other. He observes some things common between them ; common facts, common features, common principles, common laws, indications of oneness in certain things, and up to a certain extent. These resemblances he at once seizes on as means for grasping the rest. By means of these he gets an insight into the infinite world, which, stretching out in its invisible and impalpable vastness on every side, seemed to mock every effort at comprehension. By means of that part of truth which he does comprehend, he learns to lay hold of that which hitherto had been nothing but an undefined region of mysterious majesty.

An idea of a spiritual or immaterial object is not a thing to be learned at once, or grasped in a moment ; it must enter the mind in parts and pieces, and these parts or pieces make good their passage into the mind under cover of some material *fact*, or what we call emblem. This fact is a thing already understood ; we keep it constantly before us ; we fix especially upon its prominent and characteristic points ; we revolve these day by day ; in them there seems to be wrapt up a principle, an idea different from them, yet connected

with them, and with which, by reason of this connexion, we have become familiar. As we contemplate this idea, it seems to disengage itself from its material inclosure and rise upwards, and we find that in reality it forms part of a higher circle of truths, and belongs to that very region which we had deemed so entirely inaccessible. While we knew it only in connexion with the lower order of material facts, we had learned to think of it and speak of it by some particular name or sign. That name or sign we still retain, now that we have discovered that the suggested idea belongs to a higher and immaterial order of truths.

This formation of ideas, this extraction of the spiritual from the material, is a process continually going on. It is the natural process in the mind of a being composed of soul and body, and surrounded on every side by the material and the immaterial world. The former is the hand by which he grasps the latter; the ladder by which he ascends from one region of truth to another. Long familiar with certain palpable facts or objects, he begins to perceive or infer certain ideas or principles as suggested by them; these at length, the more they are contemplated, assume more of an immaterial character, and, as they do so, seem to *come out from* the materialism which suggested them, till, rising upwards by their own buoyancy, they connect themselves with the superior and spiritual order of truth, and carry up with them the soul, which otherwise had remained linked with the materialism of earth. Though thus transferred to the higher *strata*, they still

retain old material names and associations, and are still spoken of and thought of through their old material signs.

This process of disengaging the spiritual from the material element, the inaccessible from the accessible, the incomprehensible from the comprehensible, is nothing else than the way in which the mind advances in its onward progress from infancy. This is the way in which we learn, and know, and expand in mind and soul. The spiritual is at first unintelligible to us ; we learn it by our observations upon the material. The points where they meet and come into contact with each other, the common principles, the common laws, —these, carefully pondered, gradually remove the indefiniteness of the spiritual ; give them shape and distinctness, till, by degrees, they become equally intelligible with their *cognates*, while at the same time nothing of their spirituality has been parted with. It is not that we have found a *material* element in the spiritual, but we have found a spiritual element in the material.

It has been remarked that “the use of natural history is to give us aid in supernatural history ; the use of the outer creation is to give us language for the beings and changes of the inward creation. Every word which is used to express a moral or intellectual fact, if traced to its root, is found to be borrowed from some material appearance ; *right* originally means *straight* ; *wrong* means *twisted* ; *spirit* primarily means *wind* ; transgressions the crossing of a line. . . . But it is not

words only that are emblematic ; it is things which are emblematic. Every natural fact is a symbol of some spiritual fact ; every appearance in nature corresponds to some state of the mind, and that state of the mind can only be described by presenting that natural appearance as its picture. A cunning man is a fox ; a firm man is a rock ; a learned man is a torch ; light and darkness are our familiar expressions for knowledge and ignorance ; visible distance behind and before us is respectively our image of memory and hope. . . . There is nothing capricious in these analogies, but they are constant, and pervade nature. These are not the dreams of a few poets here and there ; but man is an analogist, and studies relations in all objects. He is placed in the centre of beings, and a ray of relation passes from every other being to him."

This immaterial element, thus disengaging itself out of material facts, not only furnishes us with a key for unlocking whole ranges of kindred truth,—not only expands the soul, and fits it for comprehending what is spiritual, but unconsciously operates upon the whole man, moulding his character, habits, and feelings. We not merely extract a positive amount of abstract truth from visible objects ; we are not merely put in possession of a clue which will lead us far into the recesses of many a spiritual labyrinth, but we are brought under an influence which is not the less effective because it is unfelt. Thus we find that races inhabiting mountainous regions are peculiar in mind, imbibing a solemnity, a majesty, a tenacity of character belonging to no other

race. In like manner, the inhabitants of plains, or of the wilderness, or of the sea-coast, or of rich, flowery expanses, have each their own characteristic, with which they have unconsciously been impregnated from the scenes around them. Their country has spoken to them, and they have listened and obeyed : their mountains have spoken, and they have given reverent heed ; their plains have spoken, and they have heard ; their flowery meads have spoken, and they have heard ; their seas have spoken, and their soul has echoed the voice. Each object has a voice which the soul hears and unconsciously obeys. As has been well and eloquently said, "Every natural process is but the version of a moral sentence ; the moral law lies at the centre of nature, and radiates to the circumference. It is the pith and marrow of every substance, every relation, and every process. All things with which we deal preach to us. What is a farm but a mute gospel ? the chaff and the wheat, weeds and plants, blight, rain, insects, sun ? It is a sacred emblem, from the first furrow of spring to the last stack which the snow of winter overtakes in the fields. Nor can it be doubted that the moral sentiment which thus scents the air, and grows in the grain, and impregnates the waters of the world, is sought by man, and sinks into his soul. The moral influence of nature upon every individual is that amount of truth which it illustrates to him. Who can estimate this ? Who can guess how much firmness the sea-beaten rock has taught the fisherman ? How much tranquillity has been reflected to man from the azure



sky, over whose unspotted deeps the winds for evermore drive flocks of stormy clouds, and leave no wrinkle or stain?"

In further illustration of the ways in which natural phenomena became materials of thought, suggesters of thought, and signs for expressing thought, let us observe the curious manner in which words belonging to one of the senses are interchanged with those belonging to another. What apparent connexion has the sense of taste with that of hearing? yet we hear of words "sweeter than honey." What connexion has the human voice with metals? yet we read of voices that are "silver-sweet," and of "music silver-clear." Milton speaks of "liquid notes," "melodious tears," "golden days and golden deeds." Architecture has been called "frozen music." A Gothic church has been pronounced "a petrified religion." In these, and numerous others which might be quoted, it is very difficult to state exactly the connexion, or distinctly to enunciate the precise idea conveyed by this mingling of the objects of the different senses together; yet what reader does not *feel* the meaning at once, and appreciate the beauty arising from this mingling of objects?

Such, then, are the ways in which natural phenomena are rendered *productive* and vocal. They are our alphabet, our hieroglyphics, our founts of types. They are our Æolian harps, ever wakeful, and full of heavenly melody; needing but a breath to call forth the rich stores of music hidden in each wondrous string.



All this, however, has reference more especially to an unfallen creation ; but, with the Fall, a new order of things began to open up,—the truths regarding man's fallen estate ; and, with God's design for undoing the effects of the Fall, another and more mysterious order still began to be unfolded.

Creation felt the effects of the Fall, and began to sink into decay. It began to look like a thing with which God was displeased, His frown was everywhere. Every object proclaimed the disaster that had come over it ; they spoke of evil, of something altogether wrong, of a state of things which God could not bear. The curse flowed over everything, impregnating earth, sea, and sky ; and creation in all its parts began to teach man, in so far as it was possible for it to do, what sin was, and what sin had done. The material world, in its fallen state, was to give forth a new idea to the gazer's eye—the idea of sin and ruin. Hence it was that God did not allow creation to fall into chaos or nothingness. He did not blot it out of being, neither did He permit it altogether to wither away. He arrested its downward progress at the very point where it would most effectually subserve the end in view ; He caused it to retain a vast amount of its former splendour and beauty, that man might see what a world it had been ; what a hideous and horrid thing sin must be that could deface a scene so fair and bright.

But there is more than this manifest in creation. No one can look upon it without seeing that it is not

in a state either of positive stagnation at a certain point, or gradual decay, tending irretrievably downwards to annihilation. No ; every object seems labouring to reproduce itself in its former perfect state, aspiring upwards again, striving to clothe itself anew with its primeval glory and incorruption. Every bud and blossom tells us this ; every spring and summer tells us this. Nor do they less emphatically proclaim this, because autumn and winter follow close behind, ever levelling what was reared, ever corrupting and withering what had been put forth with such goodly promise. And what is cultivation, but man's attempt to regenerate the soil ?—an attempt which shews that he does not consider creation hopelessly blighted, that he sees symptoms about it prophetic of what it shall one day attain to, when the word shall be spoken that shall heal and bless—"Behold, I make all things new."

Here, no doubt, the question occurs, How can these things really be ? It is easy to see how God, in creating all things perfect, should so construct the material as to make it explanatory and illustrative of the immaterial. But the Fall has come in and disturbed every thing. All is out of course ; all is discord. How, then, do the objects of a fallen world accomplish God's purpose ?

Certainly it is marvellous that it should be possible to represent the invisible by the visible, the spiritual by the sensible, the pure and perfect by what is throughout impregnated with the curse, and pervaded with defilement ; yet still it is so. Analogies, the

most vivid and striking, do exist between the sad realities of a fallen world, and the ideas, promises, principles, and laws of an unfallen and perfect creation. That these are accidental, who will affirm? To say that they are so, would only increase the difficulty and deepen the mystery a thousandfold. It cannot be accidental that the natural world should abound all over with such rich analogies and fit similitudes for illustrating the spiritual world. If, in digging amid ruins, we should find numerous pictures exactly corresponding to the scenes and objects around, should we venture to say that the coincidence was accidental? Most manifestly the present state of the fallen world is as perfect and true a part of God's grand original design as the first and unfallen state of creation. And most marvellous is the wisdom that is thus displayed; so to construct a creation consisting of millions of parts and objects and scenes, that, while in its perfect state it proclaimed one order of truth, in its decay and disorganisation it should proclaim another! Everything *was* an emblem before; everything *is* an emblem still. On the bright, glossy enamel with which the unfallen world was overlaid, truth of infinite variety was written so as to be legible to the unfallen creature; and when the enamel disappears, and the bright surface is stripped off by sin, a new and as infinite variety of truth is found written beneath, legible to the fallen, and suited to his altered state!

What explanation of all this can be given, save that God has arrested creation in its fall at a *certain point*;

a point which we could not have fixed, a point which He only could determine? By this arrestment, while most of its former features are retained, yet everything has undergone a change, a change in itself, a change in its relations and circumstances; so that the world, as it has existed since the Fall, has presented that precise amount of change, that exact aspect of mingled light and gloom, beauty and ruin, harmony and discord, which might furnish man with innumerable new truths, and with equally innumerable signs for expressing them.

But still we have only discovered a little of the mystery; the most important still remains behind. Creation, as it now stands, can tell us something of what sin is, and of what God's displeasure against it is; but it is very little that can thus be told. How shall He teach us fully? Besides, though creation does suggest the hope that its own restitution and man's regeneration are designed, it can tell us nothing about the way in which this is to be accomplished. But to man *this latter is everything*. What is God's method of saving him? How is he to know and understand that method? As this was the most important truth for man to know, so it was the first which God began to teach him. But to teach this, He must call in the aid of something more than the mere natural processes and objects of creation; new symbols must be constructed, a new alphabet must be formed, and a new fount of types must be cast, for the purpose of teaching man God's way of forgiving and restoring him.

The first promise made to man contained the enunciation of the great truths which were to be afterwards developed. No sooner was God's great idea announced, than immediately symbols were constructed for illustrating it; for making man understand it; for engraving on man's mind the new truth thus so briefly proclaimed; and thus the symbol and the doctrine ever went on side by side; the sacrifice and the promise, the type and the truth, being always displayed together. The altar, the fire, and the victim were the visible picture which God presented to the eye; the promise and the doctrine were the description and explanation placed at the bottom of the picture, that there might be no misunderstanding nor mystery. One great truth, for instance, which God sought to inculcate on man by means of sacrifice, was that of transference or substitution. Of this he could have no idea before, and it could only be gradually brought into his mind by being every day presented to him in a visible form. Thus he was taught that death was sin's wages; that either he must die, or another must die for him; and that God's way of saving was by substituting another life for his. Every time he brought the lamb, he was saying, "I deserve to die; and I come to God as one that deserves to die, and only as such; but let this life be counted for my life, this death for my death, this blood for my blood." Such was the symbol, such was the truth, such was the way in which the one explained the other. God constructed the material emblem of the immaterial

truth ; the emblem was material, the truth spiritual, yet they both contained the *same principle*, that of substitution ; and it was this common principle, contained in both, that made the one a *type* of the other.

The whole sacrificial or ritual system may be said to be one of *artificial* types. These are composed of things taken out of their natural order and use, and put together in a new order and under new circumstances, quite different from the natural. The lamb, for instance, in itself, may be taken as the type of innocence, and thus far it is a natural type ; but when led to the altar and there slain, its blood poured out, its parts divided and burnt, then it is an *artificial* type. But whether natural or artificial, the above remarks equally apply to both. It is the common principle or truth developed in them, and in the things they represent, that constitutes them types. Their typical character arises from their containing in them a truth, or the rudiments of a truth, which admit of a far loftier and more extended application.

These artificial types are very easily distinguished. So long as a being or thing is merely seen fulfilling its natural functions, and occupying its natural position, there may be considerable difficulty in determining whether it be a type or not. But when we see it taken out of its natural place, and made to perform other functions, then it stands forth as a thing marked out by God for a typical purpose. The whole sacrificial and priestly ritual is an illustration of this ; hence there has been comparatively little discussion about these



artificial types. They have, no doubt, a natural office or function assigned them, but then this is not the *prominent* thing about them. It is the unnatural or artificial part that is the prominent thing; and it is this that makes an artificial type so much easier to be distinguished.

In the natural types, however, there is no such artificial marking off of the objects; all is natural, and hence the difficulty of distinguishing them. They are for the most part *persons*, presented to us with more or less fulness of narrative in the inspired history. They rise up before us, and take their way across the earth most naturally and simply. Their lives are just the lives of men; they act, and speak, and move, and die, just as we do. How, then, can we know whether they are types?

Now, without professing to answer the question fully here, I have to remark that, as God himself is the historian of their lives, we may be quite sure that nothing respecting them is either omitted or narrated save for a special reason. We are made to see just so much of their character as God wished us to see, and no more. It comes before us exactly in that light in which God wished it to come, and by which He intended it to convey instruction to us. How little, for instance, of Melchizedek's history is it that we know; and yet how much we should have desired to know! Yet it is just the small amount of information we have concerning him that may be said to constitute his typical character. It is what God has *concealed* regarding him that makes



up the completeness of the type. He stands before us as one "without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life." Again, in David's case it is entirely the opposite. God has been full and minute in the narrative of his life; all the chief movements of his life are brought before us. And what a type does this life present us! That which is *hidden* of Melchizedek, and that which is *told* us of David, is the thing which constitutes the type.

But how are we to discover these types? What rules or tests can we apply for their discovery? We think it has been shewn satisfactorily that we are not to limit the types to those which are actually declared to be so in the New Testament. These are given as *specimens*; not to prevent us from proceeding further, but to be our *guides* in prosecuting the investigation. When, for instance, our Lord quoted on the cross the first verse of the twenty-second psalm, was it to teach us that only that verse was applicable? Was it not to lead us to apply the whole psalm to Him? Or, when we find some psalms referred to by the evangelists as fulfilled in Christ, is that to deter us from applying others? Does it not rather furnish us with a principle of interpretation, and a specimen, in illustration of that principle, that we may carry on the exposition throughout the whole book, to which we have thus been furnished with an inspired key?

It is thus that we should proceed with the types, taking those of them that have been Divinely interpreted to us as our guides to the understanding of the

rest. In these we may perhaps sometimes be found erring—fanciful—it may be extravagant; but still the guide is not only a safe one, however much we may abuse it, but it is the only one which we ought to follow.

Much is to be learned in the way of typical exposition from the Epistle to the Hebrews, not merely in reference to the passages cited, or the events referred to, but respecting a multitude of others to which there is no allusion at all. The apostle proceeds upon certain principles of interpretation recognised among his countrymen. He did not write as one who had discovered a new theory of interpretation which he called on them to receive; but he proceeds upon principles owned by and familiar to them. He takes his stand upon their own application of the prophecies regarding Messiah, and reasons with them upon principles which both he and they acknowledged. To ascertain these is of much importance. They are the principles adopted by the nation to whom the prophecies were addressed, and, therefore, acquainted with the circumstances in which they were spoken; a nation to whom the language and dialect of prophecy were as their native tongue, and of whose history every event had been an accomplished prophecy; a nation who had not only prophets to predict, but also to guide them to the right meaning of “what manner of things the Spirit of Christ, which was in them, did signify;” a nation that in their last days had the Messiah himself to expound to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself, to correct their principles wherein

they were false, and to confirm them wherein they were true.

Paul takes for granted, for instance, that the Jews were right in their application of the Psalms to Christ ; that the sufferings there spoken of were His ; that the honour and power there celebrated were His ; that the kingdom and triumphs there sung of were His. The apostle's object was not to shew that they were wrong in their ideas of Messiah, but that in Jesus Christ these ideas had been fully realised ; that the objections which stumbled their faith respecting His sufferings and death were the very things which proved the validity of His claim. They thought that He was immediately to assume the kingdom, and to "reign in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem, and before His ancients gloriously," and they were stumbled to see Him crucified. Paul shews them that before the triumph there must come the suffering of death. They read in the Psalms that all things were to be put in subjection under His feet, and they were amazed to see that all things were not yet put under Him. Paul shews that there was a reason for this delay, and that when His present service as priest should be accomplished, the predicted subjection of the earth to His sway should take place. He brings no charge against them for holding false views regarding Messiah, though he shews that they held imperfect ones. He does not say that they erred in believing what was *not* true, but in not believing *all* that was true. They were not so far amiss in their ideas of the

kingdom itself, but they were very defective in their notions regarding the manner in which it was to be introduced. Many seem to suppose that their opinions regarding the kingdom were altogether gross and earthly. Herein they charge them unjustly. For carnal as, in some respects, might be their ideas, yet they did not dwell upon the mere outward splendour of the kingdom; they always conjoined with this its purity, its justice, and equity. What they chiefly erred in, however, was as to the time and manner of its introduction. They expected at once a triumphant Messiah. Paul, following his Master's example, shews them that they were first to have a suffering Saviour; the cross must be before the kingdom; that which is unseen and spiritual before that which was visible and glorious.

The point, however, which I wish chiefly to notice is, that he makes use of certain *acknowledged principles* of interpretation. These may seem to us peculiar, but they must be true, and if so, of great moment to us. Some have perhaps felt, in reading the quotations from the Old Testament made in the Epistle to the Hebrews, that there was a difference between the apostle's method of citation and that to which we are accustomed. Hence some of his quotations appear to them like ingenious accommodations. They have wondered that he should make such important doctrines depend upon what appear to them ambiguous passages. They try to get over this surprise by saying that since an inspired writer has asserted

such to be the meaning of a particular passage, they must believe it to be so, though they cannot see that such is the case. But is not this just saying that an inspired author is entitled to divert a passage from its true and original sense in order to suit his views? Is it not maintaining that inspiration gave authority to pervert Scripture,—that an apostle is entitled to draw his conclusions from false premises? And yet is it not obvious that if he wished to convince those with whom he reasoned, he must take the passage in its plain and fair meaning? So that his application of it does not *make a meaning* for it, but merely shews us what the true meaning is.

The proper conclusion for us to have come to would have been, that *our* hermeneutics were at fault, and that it was the influence of these that had perverted our modes of exposition, and blinded us to the true sense of Scripture. There is, I fear, too much of the German leaven amongst us. In drawing up rules upon this subject,—canons of criticism as they are called,—we have not consulted Scripture, but have devised rules altogether independent of the principles there exemplified. The inspired interpretations, instead of being eagerly laid hold of as models, are disregarded, perhaps treated as fanciful and out of date. It is thought that man's reason alone can tell us how the Word of God is to be understood. Now, so long as we proceed in this track, we cannot expect to be expositors of Scripture; at least to attain to the knowledge of its fulness. Leanness and meagreness of view

must be the fruits of such a method. What we need most in the present day is a pure system of scriptural hermeneutics constructed after the apostolic model, of which we have so rich a specimen in the Epistle to the Hebrews.

I plead for no mysticism, but the reverse. I advocate literal interpretation. And why? Because Christ himself and His apostles interpreted the Old Testament with a plainness and simplicity that amazes us. Many of their quotations are made according to what some of us might be apt to call ultra-literality. This was the system universally recognised then, though not fully acted on by the unbelieving Jews. Hence, in reasoning with a Jew, one had peculiar advantages. We could take him to his prophets, and shew him how exactly all types, prophecies, and promises had been fulfilled in Christ. We could shew him that his own principles ought to lead him at once to admit the doctrine of an humbled, suffering Messiah. Again, in reasoning with a Christian, who spiritualises what the Jew holds to be literal, we take him to such a passage as Isaiah liii., and ask why he so thoroughly acknowledges the literality of that chapter, and yet explains away all the surrounding ones? Is the Christian in such a case a better or more consistent interpreter than the Jew? No, in no wise. And wherein lies his error? Not in explaining literally what evangelists and apostles had taught him to do, but in not carrying out their *principles* of interpretation; in stopping short at the very point where he ought to



have proceeded onwards; in applying different rules to different chapters, according to some latent feeling in his own mind as to what is spiritual and what is carnal; in adopting the interpretations of inspiration, but not its principles; in receiving its citations merely, without making its method of citation his own.

These remarks apply with special force to the subject of *typical* exposition. In this department the apostle furnishes us with many specimens as our guides. The beginning of the Epistle to the Hebrews presents us with the principles of *general* Scripture interpretation, and the latter part of it gives us specially those of *typical* interpretation. And we may wonder much, that, with such helps as these thus afforded us, we should have made so little way in investigating this subject. Many seem to turn away from it as fanciful; others as puerile; others as dry and uninteresting, perhaps unprofitable. Types are but too often looked upon as little better than quaint devices; or perhaps mere relics, curious enough in the estimation of the antiquary, but of little intrinsic value. Christians look with an eye far too cold and indifferent upon these beautiful and pregnant symbols, which set forth in such richness of colouring, or depth of shadow, or vividness of relief, the grace of the gospel, or the glories of the kingdom. How anxiously have the learned of this world been watching the gradual discoveries made in the unriddling of Egypt's hieroglyphics; yet how careless is the Church about the successful explication of the inspired symbols of the Old Testament! With what interest are men



regarding the labours of those who are toiling to unravel these curious puzzles, in order to discover that in such an age such a Pharaoh lived and reigned or died ; that such a town or district worshipped a calf, a crocodile, or a leek ; yet how utterly heedless are they to the investigation of the types of Scripture, in which are wrapt up the whole character and story and work of Immanuel, God with us ! Each one of these types has a voice which speaks of Christ, and that with no uncertain sound. If we hear it not, it must be that we are not at pains to catch it ; that we are not careful to place ourselves in the spot or the position from which their voice may reach our ear ; for like echoes, which they truly are, they can be heard only when listened to in one particular spot ; and, if we take no pains to place ourselves so that we may hear them, need we wonder that they seem to us silent and unmeaning ?

One would have supposed that in these last days, when the Holy of holies is no longer an unapproachable or forbidden shrine, it would be a saint's delight often to turn aside for the purpose of visiting its hallowed courts ; to survey with untiring interest its innermost recesses ; to linger amid its consecrated relics ; to inspect and handle its venerable furniture, so curiously devised, and of such perfect workmanship ; to tread its solemn floor, hitherto traversed only by the yearly step of the solitary high priest ; to mark the cherubim and palm-trees figured on its golden walls, all exquisitely wrought ; to stoop over and look into the ark of God, with its tables of the law, and Aaron's budding rod ;

to gaze with awe upon the place where, between the cherubim's outstretched wings, rested the fiery emblem of Jehovah's presence and majesty. Yet it is not so ; and though God has certainly, by the lips and pens of some of His servants, been calling more attention to these subjects, still they command too little of our interest and thought. They form not, as they ought, the saint's true picture gallery, his cabinet of gems of the antique, his storehouse of divine emblems, each one of which contains in it some heavenly truth, some thought of God, which may be matter of meditation for eternity.

All these remarks, however, are but general principles ; the basis of interpretation, but not the interpretation itself. We have not been expounding the types, but merely shewing of what materials they are constructed, in what mould they are cast, and how they ought to be interpreted. Minute or special expositions, however, would quite overstretch the space we can afford here, so that all we can do in this department must be very brief.

Almost all the types, no less than the promises, point forward to the kingdom, and from none of them can we extract any hint of a Millennium before the Advent. Many of them have long since *begun* to be fulfilled, but of few can it be held that their fulfilment is completed. This is reserved for the days of Messiah the Prince. In Him, at His first coming, most of them began to be verified ; but it is His Second Advent that is to be the time of their filling up. It is then that He is to shew how truly all these were but the shadows of "good

things to come." Of these good things we have the earnest now ; but the full reality remains to be brought forth at the appearing of the Lord. The instrument has been prepared,—a many-stringed instrument such as David used,—its chords have already been touched, and found in tune ; and oftentimes there comes forth from it rich music to cheer our pilgrimage and give us songs in the night : yet in this "strange land," by these rivers of Babylon, its sound is feeble and its harmony incomplete. But when our David comes, He shall take into His hands this ancient harp, prepared for Him aforetime, and striking its varied chords, shall draw forth from it such a full strain of all-perfect harmony as earth has never heard.

Adam stands before us as the first type. In part, this was fulfilled when Jesus came to be the Head of the Church, the redeemed family ; for regarding Him, as such, it is written, "As by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous." But the largest portion of it remains as yet unverified. It is at His second coming that He is to take possession of the better Eden, and have dominion over a renovated earth, with all things therein. *Now* "we see not all things put under Him," as under Adam, but *then* we shall. God's purpose from the beginning was to rule this earth by a man. The first man sinned at the very outset of his reign, and proved himself incompetent to fulfil God's design. But still that purpose must stand. Man's rebellion shall not frustrate it. It has been for a

time, indeed, deferred, but only that preparations may be completed for carrying it out in the Man Christ Jesus, "the WORD made flesh," the second Adam, who is the Lord from heaven. The government of earth shall be put into His hands, and He shall execute righteous judgment. By Him shall earth be made to flourish anew. Under Him, that fruitfulness in evil to which the soil was doomed for the first man's transgression, (Gen. iii. 18,) shall be removed; and that barrenness in good, which was inflicted on it for the blood shed on it by the first murderer, (Gen. iv. 12,) shall be exchanged for sevenfold fertility and beauty. Under Him and the true Eve—His Bride, the Church, taken from His wounded side—shall the whole earth rejoice.\*

In Cain and Abel we have the types of the two great classes which had just before been predicted; the seed of the serpent, and the seed of the woman. Their characters, their principles, their actings, are placed

\* "None ever saw this world as it was in its first creation, but only Adam and his wife; neither shall any ever see it until the manifestation of the children of God, that is, *until the redemption or resurrection of the saints*. . . . Adam, therefore, as a type of Christ, reigned in the Church almost a thousand years. The world, therefore, beginning thus, doth shew us how it will end, viz., by the reign of the second Adam, as it began with the reign of the first. These long-lived men, therefore, shew us the glory that the Church shall have in the latter day, even in the seven thousandth year of the world—that *Sabbath when Christ shall set up His kingdom on earth*. According to that which is written, 'they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years.' . . . Hence, therefore, in the first place, the dragon is chained for these thousand years."—BUNYAN *on the First Chapters of Genesis*.

before us, as if for the purpose of introducing us, at the very outset, to those two mighty divisions of the race which were to be kept up, irreconcilably, till the appearance of the great Deliverer for the final crushing of the serpent's head. In their history we see the meaning of these awful words—"I came not to send peace upon earth, but a sword,"—a sword which is not to be sheathed till He come who sent it. In Abel we see a sinner saved by grace, and washed in blood; one who is "from above, not from beneath," and whom, therefore, the world hates and seeks to slay, roused to murderous anger by the sight of Jehovah's acceptance of him and his offering. In him we see the persecuted Church, the worn-out saints, the slain witnesses, whose blood ceases not to cry, "How long, O Lord, holy and true! wilt Thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell upon the earth?" In Cain we have the despiser of the blood, the rejecter of the Saviour, the enemy of righteousness. He stands before us as the representative of the various wickedness that was to pour itself out upon the earth. In him we see the son of Belial, Edom, Babylon, Rome, Antichrist, the Man of Sin, the foe of Israel, the malignant destroyer of those whom Jehovah favours and blesses, the breaker of the brotherly covenant, thirsting for the blood of the martyrs of Jesus; and who, when he has fulfilled his time and ripened his malice, shall hear sentence pronounced against him as a "fugitive and vagabond,"—"Depart from me, thou cursed, into everlasting fire!"

Enoch rises before us as the type of the last genera-

tion of the Church, who "shall not sleep, but be changed." The bitterness of death is not for him, as it was for righteous Abel. The world, doubtless, sought to slay him; but he was taken out of their hands. He overleaped the grave prepared for him, and was caught up beyond their rage, to be for ever with the Lord. Ere he had traversed the third part of his weary pilgrimage, when wickedness is ripening, and judgment making haste to descend, he is taken away from the evil to come: true type of those who shall be found walking with God, in the day when the last vengeance overtakes the world.

In Noah and his family we have the type of that remnant, who, belonging to many nations, Jew and Gentile, shall be safely hidden from the swellings of the last flood of fire; of which the first flood of water was but a figure. In some hiding-place prepared of God, some cleft of rock, some ark, some covert from the tempest—we know not what—they shall brave the fury of the fiery blast, and, coming forth from between the waves of that red sea of flame, shall repeople a purged world. In that day, like Noah and his family, they shall build their better altar, and present to God their thank-offering of deliverance for a sweet-smelling savour; receiving in answer the gracious promise, "I will curse the ground no more;" and beholding above their heads the "emerald rainbow,"—true sign of creation's restitution, and pledge of a joyous spring, with all its unwithering verdure, to the green earth for ever.

In Melchizedek we discover the type of Messiah,



the King, King of Salem and King of Righteousness. In his double character of priest and king, he is one of the fullest types of our Royal High Priest; of Him who is to be a Priest upon His throne. We wait for the filling of this type, in the day of the appearing of the Lord. Then, when the slaughter of opposing kings shall have been consummated by the descendants of Abraham, who are to be His "battle-axe and weapons of war," He shall come forth to bless the triumphant host out of the better Salem, His own more glorious city.

In Abraham we have the type of the Church in the present dispensation. She has been called out of a present evil world, and made to forsake kindred and country at the command of the God of glory. She has become a stranger and a pilgrim on that very earth which has been promised to her for an everlasting possession. *He* had but his altar and his tent below, and his covenant God above; so has *she*. It is her all. It was enough for him; and she finds it enough for her. He looked for the city which hath foundations; and so does she for the city of the "twelve foundations," garnished with all manner of precious stones. (Rev. xxi. 14.)

The dream or vision of Abraham, recorded in Genesis xv. 12-18, is a most significant type. The component emblems are a smoking furnace and a burning lamp, passing between the divided pieces of the sacrifice. As expounded by God himself, (verses 13 and 14,) these are designed to symbolise Israel's history, and, doubt-



less, also that of the Church of Christ. Egypt was the first verification of the "smoking furnace;" for she is expressly called by the name of the "furnace of iron." (Deut. iv. 20.) The deliverance under Moses was the first fulfilment of the "burning lamp." The whole book of Exodus might truly be called the story of the "smoking furnace" and the "burning lamp:" no title could be more appropriate. And what was Israel's history in succeeding ages, but a continual repetition of these two in succession? Where, then, is Israel now? Where has she been these many generations? In the smoking furnace. But what does this type foretell of her future story? She is yet to be seen as the burning lamp; "The righteousness thereof shall go forth as brightness, the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth." (Isa. lxii. 1.) And when is this to be? In the day when it shall be said to the daughter of Zion—

"Behold, thy Salvation cometh!  
Behold, his reward is with him,  
And his recompense before him!"

Then shall this lamp be kindled, no more to grow dim or be quenched, but to shed its holy brightness over all the earth.

In Moses we have the type of Him who is to be the true "King in Jeshurun," a "leader and commander to the people;" who, in the day of Israel's second and more glorious exodus, shall go before them for their deliverance and salvation. In Him we have also the "Prophet like unto Moses," no less than the mighty

King. And as in Melchizedek we have the union of priest and king, so in Moses we see the union of prophet and king—the type of the true Prophet-King by whom Israel and the whole earth are yet to be ruled and taught.

In Aaron we have the full type of the great High Priest, in his person, his office, and his work. The blood of atonement has been shed, and, to present it, our Aaron has gone within the veil. There He now remains, appearing in the presence of God for us. Meanwhile His Church waits around, expecting Him to come forth to bless her, as Aaron did the assembled thousands of Israel. His work of blessing and intercession is not confined to the Holy of holies. When He leaves it, His lips are opened in words of still fuller blessing, carrying on the mediatory work which He had gone into the holiest to begin. He has been eighteen hundred years within the veil. We may therefore look for His return without delay. And as He departed from Olivet in the attitude of blessing, so to Olivet He shall return in the same attitude, to complete that which was then left half unspoken.

In Joshua we have the type of the Captain of the Lord's host, leading Israel into Canaan, and planting them there in peace and order, casting out their enemies from before them.

In Samuel we have a striking type of Him who was, in His own person, to fulfil the threefold office of Prophet, Priest, and King.

In David we have the "Man of War," breaking his

enemies in pieces, and ruling over Israel as their Shepherd and King.

In Solomon we see the true Prince of Peace, who "shall have dominion from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth."

But I must close these sketches. They might be greatly multiplied. And it would be found how fully they embody fragments, each in its own degree, and according to its nature, typical of that higher order of truth, for the illustration of which they were originally constructed or recorded. Divine truth is what man but slowly learns, in spite of all God's pains to teach him. It enters his mind only in fragments,—fragments which lie scattered over all Scripture, but which are recapitulated or summed up in Him who is Himself the sum of truth,—the UNDIVIDED TRUTH. It was for the foreshadowing of Him that these types were fashioned. Each is but a fragment; for, as a mere finite piece of creation, it could be no more: and hence it requires a multitude of such fragments to make up the image of the Infinite One. But when these innumerable gems shall be brought together and adjusted, it will be seen how fully and how richly they set forth His person and His work, in all the grace that has already been manifested, and in all the glory that is yet to shine forth upon the world.

Thus in type, as well as in prophecy, God's great original purpose may be clearly traced. Not only persons, but actions, objects, rites, times, festivals,—all are typical, all are framed to give utterance to the things

concerning the King, and pointing, not only to His cross, but to His crown; not only to His shame and death, but to His coming glory and righteous kingdom; all of them exquisitely polished and set, as precious stones in which His beauty may be seen; all of them telling the same story of God's everlasting purpose; all of them parts of the same God-manifesting universe, every atom of whose dust shall yet be made to praise Him for ever!

## CHAPTER XIII.

### ISRAEL.

THIS chapter must needs be of considerable length. The importance of the subject calls for it; for Israel's history, both past and future, occupies no narrow region, either in the purposes of God or in His written Word. Besides, the prophecies concerning Israel are the key to all the rest. True principles of interpretation, in regard to them, will aid us in disentangling and illustrating all prophecy together. False principles as to them will most thoroughly perplex and overcloud the whole Word of God. In addition to these reasons, however, there are others which need not be hidden. A large class of expositors, both in America and Britain, are setting themselves against the literal application of the prophecies to Israel. Even some who preach the near advent of the Lord, and hold fast "literality," make no scruple to spiritualise all that the prophets have forespoken concerning the children of Abraham according to the flesh. In these circumstances, a minute and somewhat protracted examination of the whole subject, even at the risk of a slight apparent repetition, will not, I think, be judged either superfluous or misplaced.

No one maintains that *all* Scripture is literal, or that *all* is figurative. It is at once admitted by all that it contains numerous instances of both of these kinds of writing. Hence we see the weakness, as well as unfairness, of a method of arguing which has been practised by the disputers on both sides. I mean that of charging each other with the absurdities which would ensue if either of the systems were pressed to an extreme. The argument may sometimes be brought to bear with effect upon the interpretation of particular passages ; but it ought to be set aside as a useless, and often mischievous element in the discussion of the general question. If the literalist be entitled to say to his opponent, "What absurdities your principles would educe if carried through!" his opponent is, on the other hand, perfectly entitled to point to the incongruities which would ensue from the literal system pressed to an extreme.

All admit that there is much that is literal, and much that is figurative, in Scripture. From this admission, all reasoning on this matter ought to start. Proceeding from this, two great questions meet us : *first*, How are we to ascertain what is literal and what is figurative? *secondly*, How are we to interpret what is ascertained to be figurative? I do not mean to examine and answer these questions minutely; I content myself with a few hints towards their solution.

According to the original formation of language, the figurative may be said to be the basis of the literal, as I have shewn in another chapter ; but, with language

well moulded and matured, the opposite may be affirmed. The literal is the common and natural style employed in communicating with each other; the figurative is a departure from that style. This deviation is, of course, not adopted save for special reasons, such as enforcing, illustrating, or even, it may be, in some prophecies, for veiling the subject. Thus it is the literal that is the basis of the figurative,—the point from which we start in estimating the nature and extent of the figure employed; and, conversely, the figurative is interpreted by tracing it back to the literal, by observing how it rose out of and was grafted upon it. The literal, then, is the rule, and the figurative is the exception; and, of course, before an exception can be admitted, reasons must be given for departing from the rule. Even the Rationalists of Germany, who have no great liking to the literal understanding of Scripture, take this for granted. Ernesti, in his “Institutes,” expressly says, “The natural meaning is not to be departed from without evident reason or necessity.”\* And Ammon, his annotator, a more thorough Neologian than himself, remarks, “We are not to quit the natural meaning unless it be frigid, ridiculous, or contradictory.”†

In all cases, then, we are bound to adhere to the literal, until we can shew *reasons* for departing from

\* “Non sine evidenti causa aut necessitate proprietatem deserendam.”

† “A sensu proprio non recedendum est, nisi extat frigidus, ridiculus, aut contradictorius.”



it. These reasons ought to be well weighed and found sufficient before we venture to disturb the plain meaning of God's own words. For instance, the Unitarian departs from the literal meaning of those passages which speak of our Lord's incarnation and divinity, because *he cannot understand* how such a sense is reconcilable with other Scripture statements respecting the unity of Godhead. But is that a valid reason for turning those passages into figures? The common sense of a man tells him that this is perverting, not expounding Scripture. If all strong expressions are to be set down as Orientalisms, which may be interpreted as we please, what becomes of inspiration?

But I am told that the literal sense is often so carnal that it must be departed from. Perhaps in some cases it may be so; but every passage must first be brought separately to the test. A literal fulfilment is often just as spiritual as any other; and it is a strange misapprehension of the true scope of Scripture to suppose that because some interpret literally, therefore they do not interpret spiritually. Besides, with the comparative value of the spiritual over the literal, we have, in the first instance, nothing to do in interpreting Scripture. We have simply to ascertain the *real* meaning of the words, whether that meaning be literal or spiritual. Take the prophecies regarding the incarnation of Christ. Before that event took place, there might be a controversy as to whether they were to be literally fulfilled or not. A Jew might have argued with much apparent force against a literal

meaning. What! Is God to take upon Himself the form of a man? Is Jehovah to become an infant of days, nay, to be born of a creature, to be a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, to die and be buried, as men die and are buried? Impossible! the very idea is carnal beyond endurance. These prophecies cannot be interpreted in their literal sense; they must have some figurative, some spiritual meaning. So might a Jew have argued before Messiah came; and truly, when we think what it was that he had to believe regarding his Messiah, we could not have wondered had he found much difficulty in receiving such prophecies as literal; our wonder is at the strength of that faith which, in spite of difficulties so vast, could take in the idea, and believe in the reality of that stupendous fact which the literal interpretation of prophecy involved. The fact, the glorious but stupendous fact, made known in the fulness of time, proved not only that the literal was the true sense of these prophecies regarding Messiah's first coming, but also established this truth, that the literal interpretation and fulfilment may be the more truly spiritual of the two. Take, as another illustration of the point in hand, the doctrine of the resurrection. That doctrine appeared to some, in the first ages, such a carnal doctrine, that they denied the literal accomplishment of those Scriptures which speak of it. Of these were Hymenæus and Philetus, mentioned in the Second Epistle to Timothy. They maintained that a literal resurrection was such a carnal thing, that those pas-

sages which refer to it must mean something spiritual, —the resurrection of the soul from sin. They “erred concerning the truth, saying that the resurrection was past already.” Here, also, the literal was the more spiritual of the two interpretations.

We have no objection to the spiritual, provided the literal be found *untenable*; but till it be found so, we shall continue to hold by it. Not that we object to a spiritual application of these predictions: all we ask is, that such a spiritual application be founded upon a literal interpretation. We should spiritualise and apply prophecy just as we should history; that is, we should first interpret it. We should deal with the Book of Isaiah as we should do with the Book of Chronicles. We might admit that there was more of figure in the former than in the latter, though not so much more as many suppose; but we should still maintain that the language was essentially the same, and that, therefore, the same grammar and lexicon would do for both. The question would turn out to be one as to difference in degree, not in kind. There are figures in Chronicles as well as in Isaiah; and the same principle which shews us what is literal and what is figurative in Chronicles, will also shew us what is literal and what is figurative in Isaiah. It seems often taken for granted that those who assert the literal interpretation of the blessings promised to Israel, thereby exclude the spiritual. They do not. They assert the literal blessing, because they believe that God has promised it; but they maintain the superiority and necessity of the spiritual as firmly

as do the others. They believe that Israel will be converted, and they rejoice in this as the glorious issue towards which the prophets point. But they believe more; they believe not only that they will be converted, but that they will be restored to their own land. But does their literal restoration take from them one single spiritual blessing? Or does it prevent the Gentile nations from enjoying one of those innumerable blessings which are given to them for an inheritance?

Every word of prophecy is big with meaning. Hence it must be most carefully and exactly interpreted. To attach a general meaning to a whole chapter, as is frequently done, shews not only grievous irreverence for the Divine Word, but much misconception of the real nature of that language in which it is written. Yet such is often the practice of many expositors of prophecy. They will take up a chapter of Isaiah, and tell you that it refers to the future glory of the Christian Church; and that is the one idea which they gather from a whole chapter, or sometimes from a series of chapters. Their system does not admit of interpreting verse by verse and clause by clause, and affixing an exact and definite sense to each. Bring them to this test, and their system gives way. It looks fair and plausible enough, so long as they can persuade you that the whole chapter is one scene, out of which it is merely designed that one grand idea should be extracted; but bring it to the test of minute and precise interpretation, and its nakedness is at once discovered. Many prophecies become in this way a mere waste of words.

What might be expressed in one sentence, is beaten out over a whole chapter ; nay, sometimes over a whole book.\*

These expositors think that there is nothing in prophecy, except that Jew and Gentile are all to be gathered in, and made one in Christ. Prophet after prophet is raised up, vision after vision is given, and yet nothing is declared but this one idea! Every chapter almost of Isaiah foretells something about the future glory of the world ; and every chapter presents it to us in some new aspect, opening up new scenes, and pointing out new objects ; but, according to the scheme of some, every chapter sets forth the same idea, reiterates the same objects, and depicts the same scenes. Is not this handling the Word of God deceitfully? If these expositors oppose a literal interpretation, surely they cannot object to a *minute* one. Though insisting on a spiritual interpretation, they will surely allow us to insist on a *definite* understanding of each clause, however spiritual that may be. Their spirituality is surely not inconsistent with definiteness and precision. I should like to see a regular paraphrase upon the Prophets, constructed upon their system, and going

\* "The latter chapters of Ezekiel, describing the erection of a certain temple, are involved in so much obscurity, that it seems difficult to arrive at any determinate conclusion respecting the import of that mysterious prophecy. *It is certain that the attempt to spiritualise it produces little besides perplexity and confusion ; nor have we any example in Scripture of an allegory so perfectly dark and enigmatic as it must be confessed to be, on that supposition.*"—ROBERT HALL, *Works*, vol. iv. p. 405.

over each chapter, verse, and clause. I suspect there would be found some difficulty; and that just because of the loose ideas which are entertained with regard to the language of Scripture, and especially to the language of prophecy.

The patriarchs and prophets, and members of the Jewish Church, understood spiritual things much about as well as we do. I do not speak of the clearness of their light; I simply speak of their apprehending religious worship as a spiritual thing, and religious worshippers as spiritual men, just as we do. They knew what was spiritual in religion, and what was not; and therefore they could express spiritual ideas, or spiritual objects, in plain and natural words, as we do. They could speak of a spiritual community as we would do, and find no lack of words; and we know that they often did so. The prophets often did so. The apostles did so. They spoke of the Church of God in plain and natural language—language evidently familiar to their hearts. When James wrote to “the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad,” he just meant the twelve tribes of Israel, and not some indefinite community. He took it for granted, that though he wrote after the calling of the Gentiles, words had the same meaning as they had before, and therefore he simply addressed his epistle to the twelve tribes. But if, as some seem to hold, Scripture language has undergone a spiritual transmutation since the calling of the Gentiles, James cannot mean his fellow-countrymen of Israel, but some spiritual community.

Both prophets and apostles could express spiritual things in natural and precise language. They have done so in many instances where no figure is to be seen. If this be the case, we come to a very different conclusion from some with regard to their design in using the language of Jewish history in their predictions. In many cases, perhaps in most, they employ it just because the events spoken of are literally to be accomplished, and therefore no other language could have been used. But, further, they use it in those cases, and in others also where there may be more of figure in it, because that language, founded as it was upon events and rites well known to all, brought out, with a fulness and exactness of minute description, those individual scenes which they predicted, such as no other language could have expressed. They laboured for words to express the vast ideas with which they were filled, and to depict the glowing scenes which were opened to their gaze; for words of sufficient power and vastness to set forth those ideas and those scenes, yet, at the same time, of such precision and minuteness, that every line and stroke of the picture might convey a definite idea. No language but that constructed in the way we have referred to (constructed by the Holy Spirit out of Jewish history and rites) could have accomplished this design, and attained these two objects at once. The language of prophecy is such, that to generalise it is to deprive it of its real and distinctive character, to empty it of its richness, and to rob it of its power. It has a fulness and a depth



which are altogether lost when it is interpreted in any general way. Each word calls up a picture, and therefore demands the closest scrutiny.

So far, then, from conceding the opinion that the prophets used language of the peculiarly Jewish, or, as we might call it, Mosaic cast, because they had no other by which to convey their representations of the future glory of the Church, we maintain just the opposite. We maintain that they could have expressed those general ideas which are supposed to engross their pages, in common language, and that in several places they have done so. The reason for which they used their peculiar style was, because it was the fullest, richest, and most exact that could be adopted; nay, because it was especially constructed by God to express that vast variety of ideas which prophecy unfolds, with a correctness, and, at the same time, with a power, of which common language did not admit. Its difficulty of interpretation lies in its being so full and so minute; so that every clause and every word require to be studied and analysed, and compared with the events in history to which they allude, and on which their true and exact interpretation so much depends.

We cannot admit that the man who generalises, or as he may call it, spiritualises the prophets, has any better right to do so to them than to the historians of the past. They who spiritualise the history of the Fall and such Old Testament narratives, do it on the same principles as the spiritualisers of prophecy. Nor do we see how one who turns prophecy into a

figure, can stop short till he has turned history into the same.

When it is declared regarding Israel, "The Lord thy God will turn thy captivity, and gather thee from all the nations whither the Lord thy God hath scattered thee;" what are we to infer from the juxtaposition of the scattering and gathering? That they are both of the same kind. Both were future events at the time this prophecy of Moses was given; both, therefore, would be understood in the same way at the time. The one of these has now become a matter of history. It has, by the event, been proved to be a literal prophecy of the dispersion of Israel. Are not, then, the presumptions very strong in favour of the other being of the same kind? If, before either was fulfilled, the presumption was that both were literal, how much stronger now, when history has shewn one of them to be really so! And when we are told by some that these prophecies are not to be literally fulfilled, may we not reply, that the very same reasons which prove the future history of the Jews to be spiritual, will prove their past history to be the same? If prophecy, where it speaks of their gathering, means merely their conversion, then, of course, history, when it declares their dispersion, means merely that they were left unconverted; for it is quite evident, that the future gathering of Israel, whatever that may be, is a gathering *from the very dispersion* which has taken place. The gathering must of necessity correspond to the scattering, else the language of prophecy is confusion and

uncertainty. If the gathering be only spiritual, the dispersion must have been so too. And, therefore, for aught that history tells us, the Jews may be still in their own land, and not driven out among the nations, for the words "scattering," &c., were mere figures of the historian, to denote their unconverted state!

But this leads us to consider another point which here suggests itself, namely, whether the literal accomplishment of the prophecies in regard to the literal Israel be consistent with the gospel. It is said, "All are one in Christ Jesus, therefore there can be no national distinction of the Jews, no national restoration, no national pre-eminence." I am unable to comprehend the ground or force of this reasoning. I cannot discern the very shadow of inconsistency between the two things; nor can I understand how the national distinctness, or even national pre-eminence of the Jews, should prevent their being one in Christ Jesus with their Gentile brethren.

Some have surely a strange notion of what is meant by being "one in Christ," when they make that spiritual oneness depend upon the uniformity of external circumstances. What a low idea of Christian oneness! What a poor thing must it be if it can be so easily infringed upon or broken up by national differences! They charge us with carnal views because we insist upon the future distinctness of the Jewish nation; but it appears that the charge of carnality applies to them, not to us! We believe in the literal accomplishment of the prophecies regarding the Jews, in which there

appear to be many promises of temporal blessings as well as spiritual; but we lay no further stress upon these than the Word of God lays; we admit spiritual blessings to be the highest and noblest. Our opponents, however, lay such stress upon external circumstances, as to insist, that if these exist the oneness in Christ is gone. We had always understood Scripture as telling us, not that there were no national distinctions, but that, *in spite of these*, there was a oneness which bound together all believers; a oneness so spiritual, so divine, so unearthly, so unapproachable, as not to be in the very least affected by temporal distinctions of time, or place, or rank.

The apostle's statement is this; "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female, for ye are all one in Christ Jesus." In this statement, so far from denying the distinctions here specified, his argument takes for granted that they all exist; and the greater the distinction, the stronger does his statement appear. He does not mean to say that such differences are to cease under Christianity; he plainly assumes that they do, nay, that some of them *must* always exist. In point of fact, we know that they have not ceased. The Jew has still been recognised by the same national name after he has embraced the gospel, and so has the Greek; the slave has still remained a slave; the free still free; the distinction between male and female is still the same. The apostle's object was to shew that, let these distinctions be what they may, there is com-

mon ground on which, notwithstanding these, all stand united. He maintains that these differences, even when magnified to the uttermost, cannot interfere with the perfect, the absolute, the universal freeness of the gospel, nor mar the glorious unity into which all are brought who have put on Christ. It is only when viewed in this way that we see the bearing of such a statement upon the apostle's argument in the passage cited. He does not mean to say that the Jew was no longer a Jew when he embraced the gospel, the Greek no longer a Greek, the slave no longer a slave, the free no longer free, the man and woman no longer distinguished from each other, but simply that these distinctions could not interfere, as many supposed, with the freeness and universality of the gospel.

It is not, then, the man who maintains the perpetuity of these distinctions that contradicts the spirit of the gospel, but the man who lays such stress upon them as to say that, if they still subsist, all men cannot be one in Christ. We therefore charge those who argue in the above manner with maintaining a principle inconsistent with the gospel. It is *they*, not *we*, who are chargeable with such error. We retort the charge, which has been so often made against us, upon those who have so inconsistently endeavoured to fasten upon others the very errors upon which they were acting themselves. Their ideas of the gospel must be straitened and low indeed, who can assert that the highest earthly distinctions, the mightiest national pre-eminence, could in the least interfere with the spiritual

privileges which that gospel brings to all who by faith receive it. Carry out their inference from the above passage one step further, and in what absurdity are they landed! If the freeness of the gospel be inconsistent with national distinctions, it must be as inconsistent with distinctions of ranks and sexes, which are classed under this same head by the apostle.

In this argument, however, two things are generally confounded, which yet are distinct from each other—the national distinctness and national pre-eminence of the Jews. I believe in both, because I find that both are predicted. But still they are not inseparable. They are in themselves quite different; and therefore, even though some of the arguments of our opponents were much stronger than they are against the latter, the former might be still untouched. Even though the principle combated above, regarding the oneness which the gospel brings, did tell against Israel's pre-eminence, it would be a thing of some difficulty to make it tell against Israel's national distinctness.

What, then, we ask of our opponents, is this; to tell us definitely and precisely *how* the literal fulfilment of the prophecies respecting Israel is inconsistent with the nature and spirit of the gospel. It is easy to *assert* this, but to shew *how* and *why* is a different thing. Let them examine into the real state of the question, and then they will perhaps find that it was some old prepossession that has hitherto kept them at a distance from the true point at issue, which made them think it quite unnecessary for them more minutely



to investigate a matter which, from childhood it may be, has always appeared too plain to be denied, or even doubted. If the literal fulfilment could be plainly and unquestionably proved to be inconsistent with the gospel, then we should be staggered. We should then be led to seek some other interpretation; we should then be *forced* from the literal exposition. But till we are in some such way *compelled* to abandon the plain meaning of the word, we shall continue to hold it fast.

Nor shall we give it up for any mere probable inferences. By none of the plausible suggestions of reason, or the natural improbabilities that lie in our way, or our own inability to trace distinctly its practical bearings; by none of these things shall we be persuaded to abandon the natural and unsophisticated interpretation of God's Word. We hold every jot and tittle sacred; we must take it as we find it; we must interpret it simply and naturally; nor can we consent to adopt that system which, instead of taking the living water with which every verse overflows, would distil, perchance, one drop from a whole chapter; as if that were all. It matters not though that drop be pure as the light, and brilliant as the rainbow, refreshing to the taste, and sparkling with manifold lustre; God meant us not to draw it in that way, and from that place, and therefore we must lay it aside in the meantime, and seek it afterwards at another source. It is not enough to say that such an idea is *true*; we must further know if it be the very truth for the declaration of which the Spirit indited that particular passage.



Men may say, "Is not a spiritual more excellent than a literal meaning?" Let it be so; still that is not the question; otherwise we might overturn all history by elevating it from a literal to a spiritual sense. The question simply is, "What has God said?" not, "Which is, in our esteem, the more dignified meaning?" Men may also say, as they have often said, "You literalists are always searching into things secret and hidden; your principles lead you to this; you ought not to study things not revealed." Of course, common sense teaches us that we cannot do what is impossible. If a moral necessity will not prevent us from attempting what is unlawful or irreverent, a physical necessity will surely prevent us from doing what is impracticable. This is a simple truism. But to study Scripture is to study what is revealed, not what is secret. And who is the man that will say that there is aught of irreverence or presumption in searching into every letter of Scripture? Where is the Christian that *dare do otherwise*? To know more of God, and more of the mind of God, is the saint's daily endeavour. Every verse of Scripture reveals more of His mind, and gives us a nearer and fuller insight into His vast designs. In passing from verse to verse, we seem as if passing from chamber to chamber of the King's palace. Scene after scene presents itself, wonder after wonder opens up on the right hand and on the left, all new and all divine; all in different ways fashioned, and set in order for disclosing to us "the manifold wisdom of God."

Having endeavoured to answer the chief objections brought against the literal interpretation of the prophecies, I have now to consider the evidence for that literal view. Before stating this, however, I have three remarks to make.

1st. That the burden of proof lies properly on those who depart from the natural meaning of the words. We hold that, without a decided reason, no man is at liberty to do so. To take for granted that the spiritual is the true meaning in any part of it, is to confound all language and interpretation. The opposite proceeding is the only legitimate one. We must assume that the literal is the true and sole meaning, till we can find some reason for departing from it. *It is upon the validity of these reasons that every spiritual interpretation must stand or fall.*

2d. We remark that, in so far as prophecy has been already fulfilled, that fulfilment has been a literal one. Take the predictions regarding the Messiah. His being born of the house of David ; of a virgin ; at Bethlehem ; being carried down to and brought up out of Egypt ; His healing diseases ; His entering Jerusalem on an ass ; His being betrayed by one of His disciples ; His being left by all His familiar friends ; His being smitten, buffeted, spit upon ; His side being pierced ; His bones unbroken ; His raiment divided by lot ; His receiving vinegar ; His being crucified between two thieves ; His being buried by a rich man ; His lying three days in the tomb ; His rising on the third day ; His ascending up on high, and sitting at the right hand

of God ; these, and many others, have all been fulfilled to the very letter ; far more literally than we could have ever conceived. And are not these fulfilments strong arguments in favour of the literality of all that yet remain behind ? Nay, do they not furnish us with a distinct, unambiguous, and inspired canon of interpretation ? Take, again, the prophecies which concern the heathen nations ; Babylon, Nineveh, Tyre, Moab, Ammon, Edom, Egypt. Have not all these been literally fulfilled ? Or, *lastly*, take the predictions regarding Israel. Have not all been literally verified ? Captivity, dispersion, exile, misery, contempt, and oppression, have been their history to this very hour. And was there one particular of all their wondrous history which prophecy did not foretell ? Up to this hour all has been literal fulfilment in their case. And shall the curse pronounced on them be fulfilled to the very letter, but not the blessing ?

But, 3d. We would remark upon the ambiguity with which *spiritual* expositors interpret the names Israel, Judah, and such like. These words may have three meanings. They *may* mean the literal Israel, or they may mean the visible Church, or they may mean the real spiritual children of Abraham. Now, what we remark is, that many expositors mix up these three meanings, so that sometimes one of these is said to be the true one and sometimes the other, according as it suits their views. They lay down no rule for fixing the signification of these words, so as to determine exactly when they mean one thing and when they mean

another. Prophecy, under such a system, is mere confusion and uncertainty. To say, as is often done, that, when the predictions refer to the Christian Church, they must be spiritually interpreted, is such a begging of the question, that we wonder how any one could seriously advance such a statement; for the very point in dispute is, whether they do refer to the Christian Church.

How are we to rid ourselves of the inextricable confusion in which we are involved by not knowing what *Israel* really means? When we quote some strong passage of the prophets in proof of the restoration of the literal Israel, we are met with two explanations. At one time we are told that such a passage does not refer to the restoration, but to the *conversion* of the Jews: and, again, at another time, we are told that these prophecies do not allude to the Jews at all, but to the Christian Church. In this manner, Scripture is recklessly tossed about from one interpretation to another, till the infidel scoffs at men pretending to confute him from prophecy, who yet do not themselves know whether the prediction refers to Jew or Gentile. Some, however, seem inclined to fix the meaning of most passages to the Christian Church; not to the merely visible Church, but to the really spiritual Israel. But here we do feel at a stand. These prophecies speak of the conversion of those called Israel, that is, of the conversion of those who are already converted! They were entitled to the name of Israel because they were believers, or converted men; and yet of these it is fore-

told that they shall be converted in goodly numbers in the latter days. What a maze !

The expression, "the throne of David," often occurs in prophecy ; and it is difficult to understand exactly what the spiritualists make of it. According to them, so far as we can see, David's throne might mean any throne, David's kingdom any kingdom ; or rather, it must mean every throne and every kingdom. But surely David's throne was not in heaven. His kingdom was not in heaven. His throne was not in the hearts of men. His reign was not a mere reign of principles. We are not here contending for a literal and visible occupation of David's throne by Messiah in Jerusalem ; all we are now maintaining is, that whatever it means, it must at least mean, *the peculiar sovereignty of Messiah over the literal Israel*. It appears to us, that Christ's being to receive the throne of His father David, must refer to the peculiar dominion which He is to exercise over the tribes and land over which David ruled.

That "the throne of David," and such like expressions, have the literal meaning we have stated, is, we think, evident from many passages of the Old and the New Testament Scriptures. I might ask for evidence that it means a throne in men's hearts, and leave the matter there. But I would at the same time point out at least one passage which appears to me very strongly in favour of the literal view, and that is, the answer of our Lord to His disciples when they questioned Him regarding the kingdom, as it is recorded in the first

chapter of the Acts of the Apostles. They asked, "Lord, wilt thou at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" Now, we know well what they meant by "the kingdom," and by its restoration to Israel. They understood restoration to that dominion and pre-eminence which Israel had enjoyed in other days, according to God's promises to Abraham. Not that they excluded spiritual blessings. There is no reason for supposing that they ever did so, amid the many carnal ideas which they entertained; but they believed that, in addition to these, external prosperity and deliverance were to be vouchsafed. Holding these opinions regarding the kingdom, they put the question above quoted to their Master. And what was His reply? Did He shew them the impropriety and carnality of their views? Did He tell them that their interpretations of restored supremacy to Israel were vain and worldly? No; He took for granted that their expectations were correct, and merely cautioned them against searching too eagerly and impatiently into the times and seasons. He did not put a different meaning on the words *kingdom* and *Israel* from what they did; He only reminded them that the Father kept the times in His own hand. He thus admitted that the kingdom was to be *restored* to Israel; and His declaration is no answer to His disciples' question, unless it mean this. Nay, it was fitted to mislead them, if their ideas of the restoration of the kingdom were wrong.\*

\* "Christ did never absolutely deny His having such a visible glorious kingdom upon earth, as that which His disciples looked



It is of great moment to remember for what end the prophets wrote, and what were the circumstances of Israel at the time. Almost all their burdens begin with denouncing Israel's sin, and proclaiming Israel's judgment. The nation itself, the people, the land, the cities, the mountains, the priests, and, above all, *the city, the mountain, the temple*, are the objects against which God's indignation is announced. These scenes of apostasy and judgment furnish the gloomy foreground to almost every prophetic picture. Bright as are the visions which open up to us of future blessedness in reserve for this wretched earth, yet almost all of these take their rise in some picture of judgment. Take that scene of coming gladness described in the conclusion of the thirty-third chapter of Isaiah. It is, indeed, one well fitted to comfort and confirm the drooping spirit; a scene of most majestic tranquillity, of rich and resplendent loveliness. "Look upon Zion, the city of our solemnities! Thine eyes shall see Jerusalem a quiet habitation, a tabernacle that shall not be taken down." But how does this fair picture of future glory commence? With lamentation, and mourning,

for; only *He corrected their error as to the time of this kingdom's appearing*. Christ did not say to them that there should never be any such restoration of the kingdom to Israel as their thoughts were running upon; only He telleth them that the times and seasons were not for them to know; thereby acknowledging that such a kingdom should indeed be, as they did, from the holy prophets, expect. Herein was their error; not in expecting a glorious appearance of the Kingdom of God, but in that they made account that this would be immediately."—*The Mystery of Israel's Salvation*, by INCREASE MATHER, 1669, p. 130.



and woe. "The earth mourneth and languisheth; Lebanon is ashamed and hewn down; Sharon is like a wilderness; Bashan and Carmel shake off their fruits." The prophet stands upon some high eminence, and before him lies the land of Israel. At his feet, in the dark foreground, the desolations are spread out, and he paints them with every image of terror. The land lies desolate, languishing like some uprooted flower; and from every highway the wayfaring man has gone, till all is solitude. Lebanon has been stripped of its towering grandeur, and bows the head in shame. Its cedars have been torn from its sides, and it stands in dishonoured nakedness. Sharon has lost its flowery beauty, and its fields of roses have become a wilderness. The verdure of Bashan has faded, and the excellency of Carmel has departed. Such is the foreground. After this has been fully described, then, but not till then, does the vision open out in brightness. The prophet's eye passes from the scene immediately beneath his view, and turns to one of fairer aspect. He sees the land restored, the city rebuilt, Jerusalem a quiet habitation, the glorious Lord in the midst of her, her own Messiah, her own anointed King; peace, joy, and righteousness abounding. Thus the vision terminates. Such are the two parts of almost every prophetic sketch.

We have, however, an infallible guide in pursuing our way through Old Testament Scripture. The New Testament is the inspired interpreter of the Old; and when we find the prophets cited by Christ and His

apostles, we are not only sure that their interpretations are true, but we are furnished with a rule for understanding, a key for opening up the whole volume of prophecy. I need not refer in detail to these New Testament quotations; they are all *literal*, in the strictest sense of the word; and it has been shewn that there are at least one hundred and nine instances of the literal interpretation in the history of Christ. In these there are no Oriental figures; all is simple. In truth, there is no figure at all, save when it is employed for the sake of definiteness and distinctness. There is no vagueness or ambiguity; all is precision and perspicuity. There may be some which seem less literal; but these are very few, and regarding their meaning there is difference of opinion. In the judgment of many able expositors, even these ought to be literally understood. Let me cite two instances. In his application of the prophecy of Haggai, (Heb. xii. 26, 27,) the apostle has been supposed by many to sanction the idea of a spiritual fulfilment. He is supposed to assert that that prediction was accomplished in the dissolution of the Jewish polity. But is it not obvious that he is speaking of something still future, and referring to a real and literal shaking of all things; a shaking as literal, though much more terrible and extensive than that which convulsed Mount Sinai, and made all Israel quake? Again, in the Epistle to the Galatians, (chap. vi. 16,) the expression "the Israel of God" has been generally interpreted as meaning the spiritual Israel, and as therefore giving countenance to

the spiritualising process by which the Old Testament predictions regarding Israel are robbed of all their peculiar and appropriate meaning. Now here, again, I should be inclined to suggest that the apostle may really be speaking of the literal Israel ; and as throughout the whole epistle he has been contrasting and comparing the circumcision and the uncircumcision, the Jew and the Gentile, so here he first prays for a blessing on the believing Gentiles, and then on the believing Jews. For these two interpretations we are not at present much concerned to contend ; I would not lay much stress upon any particular view of them. From them no rule can be drawn. For that we must go to the unambiguous passages, especially as these are by far the most numerous.

Regarding these undisputed passages, we remark that they are all instances of *literal* fulfilments. The obvious conclusion, then, to which we come is, that *literal fulfilment is the New Testament rule*. That there are not exceptions from this, we will not assert ; there may be such, but the pervading principle of exposition acted upon throughout the New Testament is as we have stated above. Can we be wrong in maintaining that, since Christ and His apostles quoted literally, and interpreted literally, *we* ought also to do the same ? This is certainly our *rule*. The utmost that can be deduced from the ambiguous passages already referred to is, that since we see that some quotations are applied in a spiritual way, there *may be* others, perhaps, not quoted which require to be inter-

preted in the same way. There *may* thus be exceptions to this general practice of the New Testament writers, and consequently the rule might be said not to be universal and invariable ; yet still the exceptions are so few and peculiar, that to build upon them in opposition to the general law of exposition would be most unreasonable and dangerous.

What *rule*, then, we ask, are we entitled to draw from these exceptions? Simply this, that, seeing some quotations are not literally interpreted in the New Testament, others also *may admit* of a spiritual construction ; this is all the length to which, upon such data, we are entitled to go. But even this we are not to take advantage of, nor positively to found upon, unless for particular reasons ; for the general principle must be maintained, unless there are special grounds for departing from it. It is only when compelled to abandon the general rule as untenable in any particular case, that we are at liberty to resort to the exception. We ought, however, to be sure that the reasons for which we are forced to give up the general principle are solid and scriptural, before taking such a step. It often happens that the literal construction of a passage stands in the way of a particular theory ; but that surely is a reason which ought to be cautiously acted on, inasmuch as, instead of attempting to reconcile our theory with Scripture, we may be seeking to reconcile Scripture with our own theory. We are always safe when seeking to be upon the side of Scripture, but we are not always so safe in seeking to have Scripture

upon our side. General reasonings, then, ought to be very slowly admitted as grounds for classing a particular passage among the exceptions, instead of placing it (as *primâ facie* evidence would lead us to do) as an illustration of the rule itself. In other words, our Lord and His apostles having, in so many instances, quoted literally from the Old Testament, we ought to do the same, unless special reasons forbid; among which reasons our own theories, or inferences, or systems, or conjectures, ought to be very cautiously adduced, if allowed at all.

The names Israel, Zion, Jerusalem, &c., are so commonly used among us to denote the Church of Christ, that we seldom think of asking our scriptural authority for this appropriation. Custom has naturalised the expression, so that we think it strange to ask how such expressions came to be thus spiritualised. We take it for granted that Scripture as often employs the terms in this way as we do. But do we really find this to be the case? Do we find any such countenance given to this, either in the gospels or the epistles? No; we find the names used in the same plain and natural sense; and no intimation that, in interpreting the prophets, Jew and Gentile, Israel and the Church, were to be used as convertible terms. No change of phraseology took place under the new dispensation, at least in so far as the Divine record enables us to judge. Israel still continued to be used in the same sense in which it had been employed from the days of Moses, for the nation or Church of the Jews, the descendants of

Abraham; and so also we may affirm of the similar names used by the prophets for that nation. In looking over the Concordance of proper names in Scripture given by Cruden, we were surprised to find how fully this remark is borne out by the fact,—even more fully and extensively than we had anticipated. There are really only two or three places in the whole New Testament where such names are used in what may be called a spiritual, or figurative sense. These are such as that in Hebrews, (chap. xii. 22,) “Ye are come unto Mount Zion,” and the two passages in the Revelation, which speak of the Lamb and His company standing upon Mount Zion; and even these two last can scarcely be said to be *spiritual*, inasmuch as, although the vision be symbolical, yet each part of it is taken from a literal scene, one object in which is the literal Mount Zion, which was in this way set before the apostle in vision.

In the New Testament, *Jerusalem* occurs nearly *eighty* times, and *all* of them unquestionably literal, save where the opposite is expressly pointed out by the epithets *heavenly*, or *new*, or *holy*.\* *Jew* occurs above an hundred times, and only four are even ambiguous, such as in Rom. ii. 28. *Israel* and *Israelite* occur above forty times, and all literal. *Judah* and *Judea*

\* The same remark will apply to Gal. iv. 26. There are difficulties connected with this passage; but in whatever way these are solved, still the words “Jerusalem which is above” cannot mean the Christian Church. The epithet “above,” and the whole scope of the apostle’s argument, forbid this. The apostle’s object was to prove that believers in Christ (or the Christian Church) are *free*.



above twenty times, and all literal. It would appear, then, that the New Testament affixes the same meaning to these names as the Old did. It *preserves*, instead of changing the former meanings of these familiar terms. It does not, indeed, preclude us from using them in a spiritual sense ; but it plainly shews that such is not their natural and scriptural meaning.

If, then, the New Testament be the key of Old Testament prophecy, we can be at no loss to see at least the general principles upon which the latter is to be expounded. There is no New Testament authority for spiritualising the name of Israel, Judah, Jerusalem, Zion. Our Lord and His apostles, in quoting passages in which these names occurred, took them in their obvious and long-established meaning. If they had not, how could the gainsayer or the Jew have been convinced of unbelief, or rejection of the truth which the prophets had spoken, when the truth of that charge depended altogether upon the skill with which they could spiritualise the sayings of prophecy? Or, how can we at this day refute either the Infidel or the Jew, if names and words do not really mean what they seem to stand for? The Apostle Paul convinced the Jews in his day, by distinct references to the words which the prophets had spoken regarding Israel. He

He does this by shewing that they (or this Church) are the offspring of a Jerusalem that is free. Would it not be absurd, then, to say, "believers are free because the Christian Church is free," when the very thing to be proved was, whether the Christian Church was free; which the apostle does by proving her connexion with a "Jerusalem above," which all acknowledged to be free?



applied to Israel what had been predicted regarding Israel, and thus he "mightily convinced" them. And to this day how can we do otherwise than follow his example? How could a Jew be convinced in any other way? Nay, how could you get a Jew to give you even a patient hearing? You insist upon his believing that Jesus of Nazareth is the Messiah promised to the fathers, because every thing spoken in the law and the prophets concerning Him has been *literally* fulfilled; you dwell upon this point,—the exact and literal fulfilment of all the predictions regarding Him,—and here you stand on ground altogether impregnable. But no sooner do you leave this one point, than you throw your literality into the air; you deny that any thing else is literal; and thus you dig from beneath you the ground upon which you might have stood triumphantly both against Jew and Infidel.

With such clear inconsistency, how can you expect a Jew to appreciate your arguments? Nay, how can you wonder if he should question your sincerity? You gather together the passages in which Moses and the prophets have predicted Israel's desolation; you take passage after passage, clause after clause, word after word, and shew how fully all that has been spoken has been fulfilled; you point to the ruin of their city, the desolation of their fields, their expulsion from their land and dispersion among all nations; to the misery, the shame, the degradation under which they have groaned in every age since Jerusalem became a heap. You point to these, and ask a stout-hearted Jew, "Can

you remain in your unbelief and rebellion with prophecies so explicit condemning you to the face?" Resistless argument! were it not that the arguer refutes himself by his own inconsistency. For the Jew, unable, perhaps, to meet directly such conclusive passages, slides away to others which speak in different strains. He points to those predictions which declare that, as Israel has been driven out from his land, so to that very land shall Israel return; that as their city has been laid in ruins and trodden down of the Gentiles, so shall Jerusalem be "rebuilted upon her own heaps," and arise in glory from the dust; that as their land has become a wilderness covered with briars and thorns, Lebanon being hewn down, Sharon languishing, and Carmel shaking off her fruits, so the wilderness and solitary place shall yet be glad, and the desert rejoice and blossom as the rose. He points to these, and comforts himself in the hope that his days of splendour shall return. How amazed is he when told by his Christian opponent that all these are figures; that his return to his own land means only his conversion to Christianity; that the rebuilding of Jerusalem means only the enlarging of the Church of Christ. How bewildered he looks when the very man who had been pleading so eloquently for the full and exact accomplishment of all the curses against Israel, shewing so clearly that every clause and word had been fulfilled, not one jot or tittle being abated, now complacently tells him that, though the curses are all literal, yet the blessings are only figurative! Israel

has been literally expelled from Canaan; but he is to be only figuratively restored! He has been literally scattered among the nations; but he is to be only figuratively gathered! And all this gravely asserted upon New Testament principles, in the name of Christ and His apostles! What can a Jew think of Christianity after this?

Up to this hour, then, everything respecting Israel has been literally accomplished. Nothing in what has hitherto occurred in their strange history gives the slightest countenance to the figurative interpretations for which some so strenuously contend. Why is Israel still an exile, an outcast, a wanderer, if there be no literal curse? Why is Jerusalem laid in heaps, and Mount Zion ploughed as a field? (Jer. xxvi. 18.) Why is the crown of Samaria broken, its ruins rolled down into the valley, and its vines all withered from the mountain side? (Jer. xxxi. 5; Micah i. 6.) Why is Lebanon hewn down, the oaks of Bashan withered, the roses of Sharon gone? Why do the fields of Heshbon languish? Why is the vine of Sibmah uprooted, the summer fruits of Elealeh faded, and why is Carmel bare? Why is baldness come upon Gaza, and why is Ashkelon cut off? Why is Ammon a couching-place for flocks, and the palaces of Bozrah swept away? Why is Moab fled, Idumea become a wilderness, and Mount Seir laid desolate? Why is all this, if there be no *literal* curse? And why, if there has been such a literal curse, is the literal blessing to be denied?

It is foolish to answer, as many do, "The spiritual

blessing is far richer ; why contend about blessings of meaner value ? ” Why ? .Because we believe that God has revealed them ; because we believe that as God has been dishonoured by Israel’s being an outcast from the land of promise, so He will be honoured by their peaceful settlement again ; because as we know He was glorified in leading up Israel, His first-born, out of Egypt, from the tyranny of Pharaoh, through the wilderness into Canaan, so we believe He designs to glorify Himself by a second exodus, and a second establishment in the land given to Abraham and his seed ; because as He magnified His name and power in the sight of the heathen by bringing His people out from Babylon after seventy years’ captivity, so we believe He will magnify that name again by leading them out of Babylon the Great, and planting them in their ancient possessions to inherit them for ever ; never to be disturbed by the enemy ; never to hear the voice of war again. For it is written, “I will make thee an eternal excellency, the joy of many generations ; thy people shall be all righteous, they shall inherit the land for ever.” This people, thus restored, are to be called by a new name, *Hephzi-bah*, and the land also by a new name, *Beulah* ; their King is to be the Prince of Peace, and the name of their city from thenceforth is to be *Jehovah-Shammah*, “The Lord is there.” (Ezek. xlviii. 35.)

But why, it is still asked, thus contend for literal blessings, seeing there are spiritual blessings richer far ? I answer, Why has God inflicted a literal curse ?

Was not a spiritual curse more terrible by far? Was it not enough that their eyes were blinded, and their hearts hardened, and the knowledge of the true Messiah hidden from them, so that they were left to go on in misery and darkness without God, and without a hope? Was not this enough, without being sent forth as wanderers among the nations, mingling with all, yet separated from all? Could the infliction of the temporal curse add anything to their spiritual banishment from God? If, in their future history, the spiritual blessing be enough, why, in their past history, should not the spiritual curse suffice? Or, if God, by their history, has made it plain to all that He meant the temporal as well as the spiritual, why should man presume to be wiser than God, and say that in the time to come, one of these is enough? I am not contending for temporal blessings alone. I admit that these without the other would be poor indeed. Even Eden would have been a wilderness without the presence of God; but Eden was a blessed place when God was there. So with Israel. We contend as much as any one for the future amount of spiritual blessings to Israel; we would not abate one jot of these; we know that without the outpouring of the Spirit upon them, even Jerusalem, rebuilt by God, and their land a second Paradise, would still be a scene of misery, a region of darkness. But whilst we believe that Israel shall receive to the full all the spiritual blessings which the most strenuous spiritualist can imagine, we also believe that all manner of temporal blessings are awaiting them too, according

to the promise of God. These two things are surely not incompatible. The one does not exclude or neutralise the other. Israel's being brought from the ends of the earth, and planted in his own land again, will be no hindrance to his enjoying to the full all the spiritual blessings which God has still in reserve for him. And if God has been pleased in His Word to speak of gathering them from all nations, planting them in their own land, rebuilding their cities, &c., can we, or ought we, to affirm that these expressions mean nothing else but their conversion to Christ? Is there one who will attempt to prove, that such predictions *cannot* mean temporal restoration, and that they must mean spiritual restoration? Why are men so *anxious* to deny the literal sense? Why are they so eagerly solicitous to prove it all a figure? Why have they such a singular dislike to give to such predictions their natural and common-sense meaning? Why are they so *afraid* of literality? We know of no instance in which the literal system has injured the Church, or introduced heresy; but from the days of Origen downwards, to the era of modern Neology, all manner of evil has attended the departure from the literal sense of the Scripture.

In addition to these general principles on which I contend for the literal interpretation of the prophecies regarding Israel, let me very briefly state one or two more.

I. In those passages where Jew and Gentile are spoken of together, and either compared or contrasted,



we are sure that the prophecy regards the literal Israel. If not, then what does the term *Gentile* mean? If in such passages Israel means the Christian Church, then the most obvious absurdities and incongruities would ensue. Many a prophecy would in this way be stripped, not merely of its peculiar meaning, but of all meaning together. The different circumstances of Jew and Gentile; the contrast between them; the relation the one bears to the other; the influence the one is to exert upon the other, are very frequently alluded to and dwelt upon in prophecy: and keeping these things in view, the passages are plain, their connexion clear, their interpretation natural. Deny these; make Zion or Israel to mean the Church of Christ, and whole chapters are either one mass of confusion, or from beginning to end a monotonous repetition of one single idea. See Isaiah xlix. 22, lx. 3, lxii. 2.

II. In those prophecies which preserve the well-known distinction between Judah and Israel, or Judah and Ephraim, we must interpret Israel, Zion, &c., literally of the Jewish nation, or church, or land, or city; otherwise we introduce most unmeaning names, and inappropriate figures. As, for instance, Zech. ix. 13, "When I have bent Judah for me, filled the bow with Ephraim, and raised up thy sons, O Zion, against thy sons, O Greece," &c. See also Isaiah xi. 12, 13; Jer. xxx. 3.

III. When the unfulfilled prophecy is the carrying on or conclusion of one chain, the first part of which has been literally fulfilled, or is literally fulfilling before



our eyes. If in the first part of a prophecy Israel just means Israel, of course in the latter part, onward to the end, it must mean the same. See the 30th and 31st chapters of Jeremiah.

IV. When their scattering and their gathering are placed together, and when we are told, that *as* they have been scattered, *so* they shall be gathered. Very striking and explicit are the prophecies to this effect in Deuteronomy, where the plainness of the style precludes the idea of figures. How, for instance, could the most ingenious spiritualiser contrive to explain away such a passage as this,—“If any of thine be driven out unto the outmost parts of heaven, from thence will the Lord thy God gather thee, and from thence will he fetch thee; and the Lord thy God will bring thee into the land which thy fathers possessed, and thou shalt possess it; and he will do thee good, and multiply thee above thy fathers?” (Deut. xxx. 4.) See also Jeremiah xxiii. 3, xxx. 3, 18; Ezekiel xx. 34.

V. When the countries are specified, into which they have been scattered, and in which they are dwelling. We find them dwelling in these countries, and God says He will take them out of these, and plant them in their own land again. Does this mean merely, as according to some it does, that Christ is to have a Church in these places, or, according to others, that Israel is to be converted to Christ? Impossible! What can Egypt mean,—and Pathros, and Cush, and Elam, and Shinar, and Hamath, and the islands of the sea? What sort of compound and incongruous

figure can be fashioned out of these? See Isaiah xi. 11, xlix. 12.

VI. When, in the beginning of a prophecy, reference is made to their Egyptian bondage, their Babylonian or Assyrian captivities, the conclusion of the prophecy must concern literal Israel, and refer to a literal deliverance. See Isaiah lii. 4. When God alludes to her rescue from Babylonish captivity, and says that He will set His hand the *second* time to recover the remnant of His people, it must be literal Israel that is meant, and a literal restoration that is foretold.

VII. When both their conversion and restoration to their own land are spoken of together in the same passage. This very frequently occurs: and in such cases we do not see how a figurative interpretation can for a moment stand. Were the words which predict their restoration standing by themselves, we can conceive how, by dint of ingenuity, it might be possible to impose a spiritual sense upon certain passages, and to exclude all reference to Israel's restoration to their own land, and pre-eminence among the nations; but when one verse plainly foretells their restoration to their own land, and the next their spiritual conversion to God, it seems to us a perversion and confusion of all language to say, that both these mean the same thing. Take, for example, Ezekiel's prophecy regarding the blessing to be poured out on Israel in the latter day. (Chap. xxxvi. 24-28). He had been declaring how they had been "scattered among the heathen, and dispersed through the countries." He then fore-

tells their future prosperity ; and first their restoration to their own land : “ I will take you from among the heathen, and gather you out of all countries, and will bring you into your own land.” This of itself seems plain enough, especially when placed by the side of the description given, a few verses before, of their dispersion, which all admit to be literal. But as if to prevent even the possibility of its being said that this meant conversion, it is immediately added, “ *Then* will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean : from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you ; a new heart also will I give you ; and a new spirit will I put within you.” We might instance many similar passages, but this is enough as a specimen. To us such instances appear quite conclusive. Indeed, without a previous determination not to believe the restoration of Israel, we hardly see how any one could for a moment think of disputing the literality of such passages.\*

There are two passages especially, we believe, on which much is built by some, in maintaining that by Israel and Judah are meant the Christian Church. One is in Acts xv. 14–17, and the other Heb. viii. 8–12. These are appealed to as resistless proofs that the apostles did interpret these passages regarding Israel of the Christian Church. Let us then briefly inquire

\* “ It appears to me evident that the scene of the future conversion of the Jews is their own land, where it is probable, from Zechariah, *that a supernatural interposition of the Messiah will take place in their favour.*”—ROBERT HALL, *Works*, vol. iv. p. 404.

whether they do so. The former runs thus: "After this I will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down," &c. Now, as the apostle introduced this quotation to prove that it was God's design, as declared by His prophet Amos, "to visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for His name," it is said that he meant to interpret the expression, "building the tabernacle of David," of the conversion of the Gentiles. To us it appears plain, that the expression "tabernacle of David" is not the point of his quotation or argument. *That* is in the next verse, where the words "all the Gentiles" occur. It is from these last words that he evidently meant to gather the *principle* for which he was arguing. It is upon this *alone*, and not upon the former expressions,—which we understand in their usual sense, as meaning Israel according to the flesh,—that the weight of his argument lies. All he wanted to establish was, that God had foretold that the Gentiles were to be called in. This the latter verse distinctly asserts; the former at least, if at all, only by figurative inference. We deny, then, that here the apostle meant to affirm that the tabernacle of David signified the Gentiles. He quotes the whole passage no doubt, but the part upon which he builds his argument is the latter part of it, where the Gentiles are expressly named. It is very common with the sacred writers in the New Testament to quote the *whole* passage, though only one clause was needed to prove the point in question. As a striking instance of this, we refer to Matt. xii. 15, 21, in which Isaiah is

cited by the evangelist to illustrate a particular part of our Lord's character (ver. 16),—His continually charging those whom He healed not to make Him known. Several verses are quoted, two of them which speak of the Gentiles, though this had nothing to do with the point in hand, which was simply this,—the meek and gentle character of Christ. Much more of the passage is quoted than is actually needed for the proof; and we might as well argue from this passage that Gentiles meant Jews, as from the other that Jews meant Gentiles. Indeed, upon the principles on which our opponents argue in expounding the quotation in the Acts of the Apostles, we do not see how they can refuse the conclusion, that in this passage of Isaiah, cited by Matthew when speaking of his own people, the Jews are designated twice over by the name of Gentiles. But in both places the design of the citation is sufficiently obvious, viz., to establish a particular point or principle from an Old Testament prophecy. *One* clause alone, in each of these, forms the point on which the argument rests, though, as was natural and proper, the whole connected prophecy is quoted at length.

The other citation favourable to the figurative view of the prophecies concerning Israel, is Hebrews viii. 8, concerning the new covenant to be made with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah. It has been argued, that because this is the New Testament covenant, that therefore Judah and Israel *must* mean the Church of Christ! As well might it be argued,

that when the prophets speak of the promise to Abraham, regarding the blessings which were to flow to him and to his seed through the coming Saviour, Abraham did not mean Abraham, but the Church of Christ. The whole of this passage in Hebrews, and more especially the chapter in Jeremiah from which it is taken, are too clear and explicit to be thus misinterpreted. The apostle's meaning is obvious, and the drift of his quotation as obvious, without the necessity of having recourse to any such unnatural stretch of exposition. He had been speaking of the old covenant,—the covenant made with Israel at Mount Sinai, with all its varied ritual and imperfect priesthood; and he comes to shew that all this was to be abolished, and in its place a new covenant was to be made with Israel, *with that Israel* with whom the former covenant had been made, which was done away in Christ. This was his object, this the drift of his argument, and no quotation could better support that argument than this from Jeremiah, *if literally understood*. If taken spiritually, it furnishes really no solid proof of his assertion, that Israel's old economy was to pass away, and a new one was to be established with this same nation,—especially if we consider that he was arguing with Jews, and had been speaking of the literal Israel all along.

But, in saying this, do we deny that it is the new covenant in Christ that he is speaking of, or say that it excludes the Gentiles, or that it does not apply to the universal Church of Christ? No: we maintain all



that as decidedly as any can ; only we think that it was not the apostle's direct object to establish these in that passage, though it is clear that in proving his immediate point, he establishes all the rest. Abraham's covenant was the Gentiles' covenant too ; Abraham's covenant is that upon which the spiritual children of Abraham stand ; on which the Church of Christ is built : but still, in order to prove this, it is not necessary, as some seem to imagine, that we must prove that Abraham means the Gentiles, or the Church of Christ. And as this passage asserts, that it was, in the first place, with the literal Israel that this new covenant was to be made, so we find it to have been. Messiah, when He came, "confirmed the covenant with many for one week." (Dan. ix. 27.) He confined His own ministry to the Jews ; He commanded His first apostles, whom He sent forth before He suffered, to do the same ; and in His last commission to them before He left the earth, while He sent them forth into all the world, He yet told them to begin at Jerusalem, with which we find, in the Acts of the Apostles, they very strictly complied. Doubtless, the passage in Jeremiah speaks of a time still future, in which this covenant is more fully and more gloriously to be confirmed to Israel ; but still it was at the abolition of the old economy that this new covenant *began* to be made with them, and when, in the latter day, they are gloriously gathered in, and re-established in peace under Messiah the Prince, their security shall be this same covenant of grace. "I will be merciful to their



unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more."

I trust that I have said enough to shew that such passages as those adverted to, have been misinterpreted, and do really furnish no ground for that spiritualising application of the prophecies to the Church of Christ on which many dwell. One would imagine, from the eagerness manifested in endeavouring to wrest such promises from the literal Israel, that the very hope of a Gentile depended upon his being able to shew that such predictions did really and primarily concern himself. One would suppose that God had given the Gentiles no promises of their own, that they seize with such unsparing rapacity upon Israel's inheritance. Alas for us, if our salvation rests upon our being able to shew that Israel in prophecy means the Church of Christ! What Gentile sinner, burdened with guilt, could ever venture to build upon a hope so insecure? We have promises of our own innumerable, promises stable as the everlasting hills, and radiant as the everlasting stars, which secure to us all "the unsearchable riches of Christ." And, besides, we have, in another, and what we may call a more *honest* way, all Israel's blessings. They are not blessings *confined* to Israel, just as Abraham's blessings were not confined to him, though promised more directly to him, and to his seed according to the flesh. The spices grew on Gilead, the cedars on Lebanon, and the roses in Sharon, but their fragrance may perfume the whole world. There is not one promise made to Judah from which we may not

extract blessings to ourselves. For what is the chief and most essential part of a promise? It is not the mere words by which God seems to bind Himself; or, to speak after the manner of man, to commit Himself, so that He dare not retract. No; it is the manifestation of His love and grace which they exhibit. It is the insight into our Father's heart which they furnish. And if in Israel's promises we learn more of our Father's love, and get a deeper insight into our Father's heart, and know that Israel's God is our God too, then, though we cannot say, God spake this to me personally, yet if I learn more of His character, and can thus feed more upon the riches of His grace, I am largely blessed indeed! I can say, "It is enough."

Let us now, for a moment, ere we close, glance at the story of this mysterious nation, whose personal interest in the prophecies we have been endeavouring to maintain.

"How doth the city sit solitary that was full of people; how is she become as a widow!" Her walls are in the dust; gate, bar, and rampart have gone down together. Her sanctuary no longer reflects the calm light of sunrise over Olivet from the white marble of its glowing walls. The burst of praise from the ten thousands of Israel assembled in holy festival has been silent for ages. Her solemn feasts are over; her altar is overturned; her priests are exiles; her multitudes are like the scattered leaves of autumn; and the "habitations of Jacob" are removed like a shepherd's tent. Her fields are a wilderness; her vineyards

are blighted ; her pleasant places have become a desolation ; the mirth of the land is gone. "Her filthiness was in her skirts, therefore she came down wondrously." Alas, for the beautiful city, the joy of the whole earth, the city where David dwelt and Solomon reigned, the city of the great King ! Alas for the desolate land, the barren soil, forsaken of Jehovah and withering beneath His frown ! Alas for the forlorn exiles, the homeless tribes of Israel, that once were the people of the Lord, a chosen generation, a royal priesthood ! But she shall yet rise again. She has dwelt in dust and been clothed with sackcloth, but she shall put on her beautiful garments—garments more glorious than in the days of old. Rebuilt and re-adorned, as the metropolis of the earth, she shall forget her misery in the joy of her second espousals, and remember her shame no more.

In Israel we see the standing memorial of Jehovah's faithfulness and truth. Nothing has failed of all that the Lord had said that He would do for or against that people. All has come literally to pass. The curse has gone forth against them, and every threat has been verified. Yet they are not consumed ; they are still beloved for their fathers' sakes, and preserved because of the covenant which cannot be broken. Destined for brighter days, they still live on. Monuments now of God's righteous severity, they are yet to be more signal monuments of His unchanging grace, for "where sin abounded, grace did much more abound." Tossed from billow to billow upon a single plank, they have

weathered centuries of storm, seeing the mightiest vessels part anchor in the blast and go down at their side, themselves buoyant still. *Mersus profundo pulchrior evenit!* To this day, as hitherto, unfixed, unanchored, unsheltered, unprotected; driven hither and thither by the tide or the tempest, they are awaiting the outburst of the world's last hurricane, which, while it devastates the earth, and strews the sea with shipwreck, shall leave them unharmed, nay, waft them home! What faithfulness, what patience, what unchanging love! In Jehovah's eyes they are precious still; the chosen heritage of God. Their covenant abideth sure; their promises are imperishable. Were it not for these, where had they been? Would they not have perished from the earth, and been found no more among the nations? These promises held them fast, and bound their roots "as with a band of iron and brass," that they should not be swept away nor consumed. Through all these eighteen hundred years they have been sustained as a nation,—emerging from the smoke and ruin of a thousand cities, rising out of the fragments of a hundred empires, surviving with mysterious tenacity of life, the storm, the sack, the massacre, the flood, the flame!

The prominence given to Israel in the prophets forces itself vividly upon our notice. Nay, history and prophecy are in this respect alike. Such is Jehovah's purpose; such is one of His ordained channels of self-manifestation. "O the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!" Surely, if any-

thing could humble us Gentiles, it would be the history and the destiny of the slighted Jew, to whom pre-eminence among the nations has not only been given for a few generations, but *entailed* by God's own deed in perpetuity. If any man might boast, the Jew might, more than all. To him pertained the adoption, the glory, and the covenants, the giving of the law, and the service of God. His was a more costly temple than heathen splendour ever reared; his a more august and sacred priesthood; his a nobler and more royal line of princes—the last of that line Jehovah himself incarnate! And was ever nation so mysteriously indestructible? Plunged into the furnace of Egyptian, Assyrian, Babylonian, Grecian, Roman tyranny, it has come forth unconsumed! Kingdom after kingdom has crumbled down, or been swallowed up, yet Israel has walked secure over the *débris* of empires, or stood upon the fragments of each successive wreck, casting his wistful eye towards Jerusalem, the heritage of his nation and the city of his soul. And can the descendant of that unearthly race not feel his own superior dignity, as, standing amid the ruins of ancient empires past away, and the decay of modern kingdoms falling to pieces around him, he thinks how soon all these shall be as “the chaff of the summer threshing-floor,” while he *cannot* perish or be swept away with the dust of their ruins? He feels that, even in his degradation, the nobles of the Gentiles are not his peers. On *his* safety hangs the world's salvation; for in him all nations are to be blessed, and it is

he whom God is yet to send forth, to "declare His glory among the Gentiles." (Isaiah lxvi. 19.) And at no distant time shall the outcasts of Israel and the dispersed of Judah return and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads. "Beautiful for situation" shall it yet be seen, the joy of the whole earth, the city of the great King. A more glorious temple shall be there, and a more glorious Shekinah than before. A king shall reign in righteousness, and the isles shall wait for that law which is yet to come forth from Jerusalem, the metropolis of the world.

In them we see the true *romance* of history. Theirs is, indeed, a strange story, oftentimes more like a vision than a reality ; yet true, pre-eminently true ; not lost in fable or mist, but one entire certainty from the beginning hitherto. There is light along all its course, as, commencing with Abraham, in Ur of the Chaldees, it winds its various way, from age to age, through innumerable mazes ; for it is a four thousand years' story, and not yet concluded. Who of all the nations of earth has such a story to tell ?

Yet the *general* history of the nation does not give us all the romance of their strange annals. True, their *national* story is a marvellous one indeed, too marvellous to be read without feelings of solemnity and awe. Yet the *private episodes* of Jewish story furnish us with scenes more thrilling still. The personal narrative, the secret history of the Jew, furnish scenes of deeper and more startling interest than can be found



elsewhere. The novelist even feels this. Hence we find that the most striking portions of some of the most striking works of fiction are those in which the Jew takes, if not the foreground, at least some part of the scene. He stands before us like a friendless orphan, drooping in form, and desolate in look and voice. He seems like the inhabitant of another star, banished from his native orb for some mysterious crime that controls his destiny and haunts his footsteps ; a crime which he will not confess, but cannot expiate ; a crime for which he seems to wear hidden sackcloth, and which withers him into the saplessness of age ere his manhood has blossomed. The exiled loneliness, the calm familiarity with sorrow, the silent resignation, the melancholy majesty, the passionate patriotism, the ineradicable and lofty nationality,—all these characteristics, coupled with a lot the heaviest and sharpest that sin is heir to, form a subject of most thrilling interest, even to a vain and unthinking world. It is so sad, yet so real ; so strange, and yet so true !

Some may think all this more sentimental than true ; or, if true, at least having in it more of the poetical than the profitable element of truth. In answer to this, I might say, that if it be romance, it is at least the romance of Scripture ; if it be poetry and sentiment, it is the poetry of naked *fact* ; it is not the fond sentiment of an earthly dreamer, but the Divine sentiment of an Infinite Mind, the thoughts and utterances of the God only wise. But, further, we argue that it is the reverse of unprofitable or vain.



This is not the fit time for me to argue this question, which would stretch over a volume ; but it is sufficient to say, that a history which God has taken such pains to develop,—a history of which He has given us far more than a vague outline,—a history which seems to occupy so much of His thoughts and purposes,—a history by means of whose events He is bringing out into view His own gracious and holy character,—such a history must be thoroughly practical and useful.

The gospel is God's testimony to Himself in *words*. Israel's history is God's testimony to Himself in *facts*. The gospel is God's declaration, that where "sin abounded, grace has much more abounded." Israel is the living, visible testimony to this marvellous and blessed truth. The history of Israel, in every age, preaches to us the gospel of the grace of God. It is throughout, the story of man's sin and of God's deep and untiring love. It shews us how manifold, how endless are man's ways of sinning ; and it shews us how still more manifold and endless are God's ways of forgiving, and loving, and blessing. Israel is the nation in which man's rebellion, man's wickedness, man's hatred of God, are brought most clearly out to view, that we may know what man is, even in his best estate, and with every possible advantage ; that we may know what a human heart is, even when plied with every motive to love, and serve, and honour the God that made it. And Israel is also the nation where the good that is in God is ever shewing itself superior to the evil that is in man ; where love and grace are ever

rising immeasurably above, and stretching inconceivably beyond, the uttermost extent of human enormity and sin. This surely is profitable.

But there is another view of the subject which may be taken, a view more striking, perhaps, to the general eye,—the relationship of Israel's history to that of the world. There is a mysterious connexion here, which we can easily see, though we cannot so readily explain.

Israel dwelt alone, and was not numbered among the nations. Yet all nations were in some way affected by her. There are few nations whose history materially bears upon others, especially the distant and the isolated. But the influence of Israel was over all. Separated by God from all the earth, she yet came into unseen contact with it in all its motions and changes. All God's thoughts concerning the world, and His dealings with its people, are linked to His purposes respecting the Jew and his land. Israel was set up as God's model government to the nations, and shall again be set up as such, in the latter day, though with far greater stability and glory. All things pertaining to her, Scripture connects more than in any other case, with the glory of God and the kingdom of His Son. Round her prophecy clusters ; and upon her the world's destinies seem to hinge. Her past exaltation, her present abasement, and her future glory, are all most mysteriously woven into the world's history, past, present, and to come. Without Israel, that history is a blank,—a blank, we mean, to the believing eye, not the

wise and learned of this world, for the soul that can enjoy an existence without Christ can see no blank in history though Israel be not there. Yet even an unbelieving historian cannot help feeling that there is some strange, though perhaps invisible tie, which has connected the fate of Israel with the destinies of empires. Israel has been the pulse of the world. As ocean rises and falls, along its far-scattered coasts, by the silent pressure of a distant planet—a pressure which intervening clouds have no power to diminish—so have the nations of the earth owed their *tides* to Israel, and this as truly in her darkest as in her brightest age.

“Persepolis, Rome, Babylon;  
For this ye sank, for this ye shone!”

The streams of the nations flow, tinged with drops, from the cup of Israel; bright with her blessings, or discoloured with her sorrows. All her invaders, from the Assyrian to the Roman, from Shalmaneser to Titus, only dispersed her over the nations to exert a wider influence. The scattered dust of Samaria has sprinkled every nation of the East, and the exploded fragments of Jerusalem have found their way into every kingdom of the West. There are few nations or kingdoms that have not, to some extent, felt their silent, passive influence. Like the Jesuits, though not with their accursed ends, they have influenced courts, and turned, like a hidden rock, the currents of empires. Unnamed and unacknowledged, they have presided at royal councils.

The financial prosperity of nations has taken its impulse from them, advancing or receding at their will. With the sinews of war in their hands, though with not even one soldier in the ranks, and with but little interest in the issue of the conflict,—for whoever triumphed, still *they* were oppressed,—they waged war and made peace at pleasure. Theirs has been an influence everywhere felt, but nowhere either acknowledged or honoured; and in the midst of all this, suffering, torture, shame, and death, have been the unvarying lot of the broken-hearted Jew. In what city have they not been dwellers, or sojourners at least, since first they ceased to have a city of their own? Whom have they not had for a sovereign, since the day they cried, “We will have no king but Cæsar?” They have seen no temple for many generations, since the hour when the Roman torch laid in ashes their beautiful house where their fathers praised; yet they hold fast their ancient worship, a spectacle of wondrous constancy, and blind fidelity stronger than death. No high priest has ministered at their altar since the time that Jerusalem was led captive; yet have they maintained their old traditional religion, amid nations of infidels and idolaters, in spite of everything that the torture or the bribe could accomplish to make them renounce their faith. What a monument! And who can say how much the very sight of it has wrought in the earth?

Many a nation has been blessed because they favoured Zion; but who has ever prospered that injured

her? He who has touched her has touched the apple of God's eye. Egypt was scourged because she oppressed her. Edom was cursed and plagued because he remembered not the brotherly covenant. Assyria was broken because she overflowed Immanuel's land. Babylon was brought low because she held her in captivity. And soon, too, shall mystic Babylon receive her awful recompence for the blood and torture of the persecuted race. It was an infidel king of the last century who said, "Meddle not with these Jews; no man ever touched them and prospered." Jerusalem has truly been "a cup of trembling to all people round about, a burdensome stone for all people; and all that burdened themselves with her have been cut to pieces."

These are things which the Church of Christ ought especially to remember, whether she considers the duty of favouring those whom God favours, or the blessings which He promises to those who seek their peace, or the curses with which He has cursed those who have trodden them down. Whether, then, we call to mind the blessings which have flowed from them to us, and see how their fall has been our rising, or observe the manner in which the prophets represent the future destiny of the world as hanging upon the fortunes of Israel; whether we remember their once high dignity, as those to whom belonged the glory and the covenants, the giving of the law and the promises, or their long misery and degradation and dismemberment; whether we honour them as the kinsmen of Christ, or

pity them as the murderers of the Lord of glory ; let us look on Israel as God looks on her ; let us understand the deep meaning of her history, and learn to sing her songs.\*

\* About the middle of the 17th century, Samuel Petto published a work called "The Revelation Unveiled," which, along with his book on the Covenants, was republished in 1820, with a recommendation from Drs M'Crie, Paxton, &c. In it he makes very frequent reference to "Israel, and the things concerning them that are to fall out in the latter day." After speaking at length of the time of Jacob's trouble, he goes on to mention, as next in order, "the setting up of the glorious kingdom of Jesus Christ, the new Jerusalem, or the glory of the Church here, a thousand years. Rev. xx. xxi." He then adds, "The rise or first state of this kingdom will be speedily after the resurrection of the witnesses, and the first conversion of the Jews, and before the thousand years begin. . . . This thousand years will be a glorious time ; not absolutely as if sinless ; but comparatively, or compared with any former state of the Church. *Possibly it may be ushered in by a personal appearance of Christ in the clouds ;* but I cannot say that it will be by the personal presence and continuance or reigning of Christ on the earth. Now will Ezekiel's city and temple be erected, the glory of which will be that the name of it from that day shall be Jehovah Shammah, the Lord is there. Here will begin the state of the New Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven, and is not by our going up to heaven. Then shall be given to Christ, as Daniel vii. 14, dominion and glory and kingdom."—P. 136.



## CHAPTER XIV.

### ANTICHRIST.

THERE are strong reasons for concluding that Popery, in its present form, is not, in strict prophetic speech, the last Antichrist. It has many of the features of the Man of Sin, but it has not all; it is lacking in some; and it is this partial unlikeness that leads us to anticipate something worse, something more terrible, something which will manifest more vividly what the combined energy of human and Satanic wickedness can effect, when fully expanded and matured.

Still, there is a distinct and observable oneness of feature between these two forms of evil. There are some clear points of difference, but there are more of resemblance. There is a striking family likeness, distinct traces of a common paternity, and an undoubted brotherhood. There is more than enough to identify them as belonging to one genus, one plant, one stem. That the fruit and the blossom are very unlike each other in many things, in colour and in shape, for instance, is no proof that the one is not related to the other, and that both are not the produce of the same tree. Pagan Rome might be but the branch, Papal Rome the blossom, and the last Antichrist the fruit;



but does this disprove their true personal identity? Does it not much rather confirm and display it?

The last apostasy will in all likelihood manifest more of the infidel or the atheist than Popery has done; but still it is an "apostasy," a "falling away." It originates in, springs out of, and is in some way connected with, the professing Church of Christ, just as the fruit is connected with the branch, though but by a slender stalk. Its name, ANTICHRIST, shews that it *professes to be Christ*, which it could not do were it openly and utterly infidel. It is an apostasy which has taken ages to ripen, and which, though perhaps shooting up suddenly into unexpected strength, does not rise from some separate root of its own, but is the matured offspring of previous apostasies, their consummation and unfolding, towards which every one of them has been pointing, and which every one of them contained in the bud from the beginning.

But though I believe all this, I do not the less surely believe that Popery is the *present* Antichrist, out of which, how suddenly I know not, the coming Antichrist is to spring. Popery is the apostasy of the day, and, as such, ought to be dealt with by the Church of Christ. There are many symptoms about it of a change of form and aspect; but whatever aspect it assumes, it is still the representative of the serpent's seed, the personification of the Wicked One in our day, the enemy of the saints. It is right, indeed, that we should fully understand what God has revealed concerning the darker and more hateful form which it is to assume;

but it is wrong to overlook its *present* aspect, as if that which was to come concerned us more immediately than that which is in the midst of us. This would truly be as absurd and perilous as for an army to stand idly on the field, and allow itself to be cut to pieces by a near enemy, because it sees in the rear a more terrible assailant pressing on. I do not mean that the present ought to shut out or supplant the future. But certainly the future ought not to supersede the present, nor blind us to our immediate danger and pressing duty.

Some writers on prophecy seem so engrossed with a future Antichrist as to forget, nay, to deny the present. They are so occupied with the picture which they have drawn of the Man of Sin, as yet to be revealed, that they refuse to see any resemblance at all to him in the Church of Rome. They palliate the atrocities, and apologise for the doctrines of Popery, in order to be able to deny the likeness. They labour to conceal or blot out those features expressive of a common paternity which have been so often pointed out. They spare no effort to persuade men, not only that Popery is not the Man of Sin, but that it has nothing in common with him. They exaggerate the future, they soften and palliate the present, they try to obliterate some of the worst features of Popery, in order to remove everything by means of which it might be identified with the Man of Sin.

Nothing can be more perilous for the Church. It throws her entirely off her guard. It persuades her,

that though Popery may be an enemy, yet it is not the bitter and deadly enemy which Scripture represents it to be ; nay, that there is nothing so decidedly anti-christian about it as to prevent its being, in some measure, recognised as a Church of Christ. It makes her believe that to arm herself against Popery as against Antichrist, is entirely to mistake her enemy. Thus she is soothed into a false and most fatal security ; she unfastens her armour, she lays aside her weapons, under the persuasion that her great adversary has not yet arisen.

Thus she is represented as without an enemy ; at least without that organised system of hostility of which the Holy Spirit has forewarned her. Is this consistent with Scripture ? Does the sure word of prophecy ever teach us this ? Are we not continually reminded of the working of Antichrist around us, and in our own day ? Is it not God's special object to keep us on the watch against the Antichrist of the day ? It is the *present* apostasy, even more than the future, that the Church needs to know and watch against. It matters not how immature that apostasy may be ; it may be only in infancy, or it may be in youth ; still it is against that particular development or stage of it that is in operation in our own times that we are to watch. It is on that that our eye should be fixed. It is the movements of that power that we are specially to observe. It is on the side on which that foe assails that we are to throw up our strongest entrenchments. The belief that there is a stronger and more numerous

host in the rear, marshalling its troops for the onset, is no reason why we should not repel a present and most formidable enemy, whose fire is thinning our ranks, and whose persevering skill has already carried some of our strongest defences.

Students of the prophetic word should have been wiser. They know that God in past ages has always been warning His Church of a *present* enemy. While predicting one more terrible, He has never allowed her to lose sight of that which at the moment was assailing her. He never allowed her to disparage or under-rate the foe at hand, by comparing him with the greater that was to arise. Now this is, I fear, what some, with the lamp of prophecy in their hands, are doing in our day. They are giving forth such views of the last apostasy as to lead to the impression that all previous apostasies are insignificant and impotent. They are diverting the attention of the Church from a present to a future evil. Thus while they weaken her position, they strengthen that of the adversary. It is one of Satan's devices thus to pervert the prophetic word; nay, to turn it to his own advantage. That word is the special unveiler of his craft and wickedness. The light which it was shedding upon the Papal Apostasy was awakening men from their dream of peace, and threatening to cast a most destructive blight upon his schemes of evil. How is he to meet and repel this? By misleading men as to the *present form* of Antichrist. He cannot get them to deny an Antichrist. That name is too plainly written on the Divine record.

But he tells them that Antichrist is entirely a future apostasy ; an apostasy *per se* ; quite isolated from the present state of things ; and that therefore, whatever Popery may be, it cannot be Antichrist. He so engrosses them with an infidel apostasy yet to arise, that they cannot persuade themselves that there is any other that deserves the name.

By thus presenting Antichrist as future, he persuades the Church to ungird her loins. By pointing to it as an isolated object, he shuts off the light which it sheds on Popery,—light of the most important kind. For if what is to come be but the fruit and issue of what is present, then we may expect to find in Popery, though only budding, *all* the ungodliness, the rebellion, the lawlessness, and the atheism, which are yet to be exhibited in their Satanic ripeness, when the Man of Sin stands up in full-grown strength and energy. I believe, as I have already said, that the worst form of the apostasy has not yet been displayed. But does this render me indifferent to the form of it that now exists ? No. It renders me doubly alive to it. For I see what the evil really is even at this moment, though not yet unfolded. I read the *true* character of Popery in the features of the coming Antichrist, who is its lawful offspring. I see the utter hollowness of that mighty and imposing structure of false religion. I see the dark atheism that lurks under her curiously-woven veil, the denial both of the Father and the Son. I see the harlot without disguise ; no longer decked in many-coloured raiment, bright with her gold and silver

and precious stones ; but stripped of every covering ; loathsome, naked, vile.

What is Popery ? It calls itself a Church of Christ ; nay, it calls itself *the* Church of Christ, thereby denying the title to every other. But though assuming this name, it has set itself in everything to oppose, deny, and subvert the gospel of the Lord Jesus ; nay, to present itself as a *substitute for Christ himself*. There is not a single doctrine and scarcely a precept of the Bible which it did not profanely burlesque or unblushingly set at nought. Did Christ say, "Call no man father on earth?" It proclaimed one of its own priests, an Italian monk, as the Church's infallible head. Did Christ say to His ministers, "Keep thyself pure?" It set up a standard of purity in opposition to His, which opened a flood-gate to all lasciviousness ; and then licensed the impurity by building houses of holy name, in the darkness of whose accursed chambers the foul rankness of monastic debauch might be screened from every eye. Did Scripture say, "Speak ye every man the truth to his neighbour?" It declared that no faith was to be kept with heretics, that the Church could dispense with oaths, nay, that no oaths against the interests of the Church were binding, but that in her cause falsehood was no crime, and perjury meritorious. Did an apostle say, "There is ONE Mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus?" It exalted the mother of our Lord to a conjunct and co-equal mediatorship, and canonised a "barbarous rabble of saints" to share this honour.



Did God declare, "If any man shall add unto the things that are written in this book, God shall add unto him of its plagues?" It declared that "all saving truth is NOT contained in the Holy Scriptures," but also in unwritten traditions, "which whosoever shall not receive with like piety and reverence as he doth the Scriptures, *let him be accursed.*" Did God forbid to curse, and command only to bless? Its whole system, creed, and service, are full of "cursing and bitterness." Did God say, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself?" The spirit of Popery was "hatred, variance, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies," its history one scene of blood and butchery, imprisonment and torture, for conscience' sake; for, even from the year 1540 to 1570, nearly ONE MILLION of Protestants were put to death by it; and from its rise, it is computed that above *fifty millions* have suffered death at its remorseless hands. Her deeds have been the darkest that ever disgraced barbarism. Yet they blacken every page of her annals. She is proud of the enormities; and for their perpetration her Popes have ordered the *Te Deum* to be chanted throughout the churches.

It is a mistake to suppose that only some of its doctrines are unscriptural. Popery is one mass of hideous error. It is, in its very nature and design, subversive of the gospel of Christ. It is, and has been all along, Satan's mighty engine for counterworking and defeating the work of Christ. It has been well named a "stupendous deception and universal counterfeit of truth." Of it one has well written, "Pagan Rome was



Satan's work, constructed with his own materials of ambitious aims, policy, and knowledge; but Papal Rome is Satan's work, constructed with the materials of God." And as the Church of Christ may be called the representative of Christ on earth, so may the Church of Rome be called the representative or personification of the Evil One. It is the truest image of Satan that the world has yet seen, though one truer and liker still is preparing. The aim of Christ's work is to build up men in His own likeness, and to His own stature of perfection: the object of Satan's work in the Papacy is to build up man in his own dark likeness, and to his own stature of wickedness.

It is needful that the true character of Popery should be thoroughly laid bare, that her history should be searched, and her character proclaimed as the "mother of harlots and abominations." It is needful that she should be pointed to as the great persecutor of the saints, in whose skirts is found the blood of saints and prophets, and of all who have been slain upon the earth.\* It is needful that we should be reminded of the crimson stains upon the harlot's skirts; of the Inquisition dungeons; of the dark tribunals of Austria; of the massacre of France, when the sewers of Paris flowed red with Huguenot blood; of the

\* How can the blood of all the saints be found in Antichrist, if he rises up as a power by himself, in no wise connected with the previous powers of evil? And where is the blood of saints to be found, but in the Church of Rome,—at least for the last thousand years?

“bloody Piedmontese, who rolled mother with infant down the rocks;” of the fires in Smithfield; of the fields of Ireland, reddened with the blood of two hundred thousand Protestants. It is needful thus to read and re-read the history of Popery, that we may learn how thoroughly antichristian it is in all its parts, how nearly it resembles, in feature and in principle, the great Antichrist of the last days. And it is the more needful thus to sound the alarm, because some writers on prophecy have spoken in such a manner of Popery, as to soothe Protestants asleep, and animate our great Popish enemy.

Nor is it a false alarm that we would thus sound. Never, since the Reformation, has Popery made so deadly and determined a struggle for the recovery of throne and altar. Hundreds of missionary priests are roaming the island, thrusting themselves into every corner, winding themselves into the confidence of the influential, and insinuating themselves with serpent-stealth and subtlety into all seats of power. They mark off their districts, and rear their churches everywhere, carrying on their work of proselytism at any expense, and by every method. They build with costly splendour; they adorn with most attractive grace; they cast the net with consummate art, that beneath its ample stretch they may entangle the thousands of every age, and class, and temper, who love a theatrical religion, that will gratify the carnal sense, and furnish men with a licence for the commission of any amount of iniquity. They talk proudly, too, and

boast openly of their success, casting off the mask of meekness and modesty which they had in some measure assumed ; proclaiming loudly that as no heresy was ever allowed more than a duration of three centuries, the British apostasy has now reached its close. Thus they prophesy of their own speedy triumph, and of our hastening doom.

It is not my part either to confirm or to confute the prophecy. A few years will unfold it all. There may be darker days in reserve for Britain than many will believe. Her day has been long bright, her sky long cloudless. What nation has ever enjoyed a century of such profound tranquillity as we have experienced, unbroken save by a few political commotions, or a few murmurs of fretful discontent. The cup of trembling, which was put into the hands and pressed to the lips of every nation in Europe, passed us by. The earthquake shocks that have for the last half century successively laid waste every kingdom around us, convulsing nations and overturning thrones, tearing up a thousand hearths, and agitating ten thousand fearful bosoms with alternate despair and hope, reached us not, nor stirred even one ripple on our sea-bound shore. When God raised up Napoleon as the scourge of the Papal empires, when He called him to His foot, gave the nations before him, and made him ruler over kings, giving them as dust to his sword and as driven stubble to his bow, He appointed him his bounds that he could not pass over, and we were preserved, unmolested and secure. When every capital in Europe was in flames, from

Moscow to Madrid, we were sitting each man under his own vine and fig-tree, with none to make us afraid.

The enemy, with the vanquished might of Europe in his train, prepared to overwhelm us. He threatened, boasted, numbered his armies, talked of a second Armada ; but in vain ! We were secure. We needed "no bulwarks, no towers along the steep." We were Protestant, and therefore invincible. Our PROTEST was our palladium. From our far-off lonely island, there went forth upon the earth the solitary voice that testified for Christ against Antichrist, in the midst of a world of idolatry and darkness. God heard the testimony, and he blessed the witness !

But since that time, what has taken place ? We have laid aside our protest as too bigoted for an enlightened age like ours. We have struck our Protestant colours, and hung out the flag of neutrality, or rather, we should say, of religious indifference. With our own hands we have taken down the old ancestral standard which had braved three centuries of storm ; allowing the spoiler to tear in pieces and trample under foot the inheritance of our fathers, the birth-right of our sons ; proclaiming to the world that our past protest was a stain upon our history, and that it matters nothing to a nation's wellbeing whether the Bible or the Koran be the basis of our statute-book, or whether the national ensign be surmounted by the cross, the crescent, or the triple crown. We may well be troubled for our land. We have little reason to

hope that we shall ride out another storm as we have done the last. The anchor that held us fast is gone.

It is the practice of a certain class of prophetic expositors to depreciate the Reformation. Their system requires this; for unless they can prove that Popery is not so great an evil, nor Protestantism so great a blessing, as has been believed, the proof of their theory is defective. The class I allude to is not yet a large one; but I fear it is on the increase. And it is because of this that I have introduced the present chapter. Whilst agreeing with them in some things, I think the application which they make of these things so perilous and unscriptural, that it ought to be protested against by every right-minded student of the prophetic word. It will be sad indeed, if, in order to build up our prophetic system, we set out with defending Popery or disparaging the Reformation.

It will be a fatal day for the Church when Satan shall thus succeed in silencing, or at least in muffling, the prophetic testimony against the abominations of Rome. It would be a master-triumph indeed if he could now persuade the people of God, out of the word of prophecy, that the Reformation was a very doubtful blessing; that Popery has no resemblance at all to Antichrist, and that they should be looking beyond the present into the future for him against whom they are to contend. And then when that day arrives, and the last Antichrist stands before us, the great deceiver will shew them how all the predictions regarding the apostasy have been long ago exhausted

in the Papacy, just as he teaches Papists to believe that they were all exhausted in Pagan Rome.

There are a few fair pages in the polluted scroll of time. There are a few periods on which the eye delights to rest with exalted satisfaction and untiring interest. Of these, one of the brightest is THE REFORMATION. It was a glorious day for Europe. Over all its kingdoms the blessed light broke forth; but it remained only with a few. To most it was but the flash of the lightning that left the gloom the deeper. In Spain, in France, in Italy, it burst forth with momentary brightness; but it was quickly quenched—quenched in blood. But it was the rising of Britain's day-star, a star which has shone for three centuries upon us with benignant influence, which, though struggling at times with many a storm, and labouring through many a cloud, has never yet gone down, but continued to shed peace, prosperity, and triumph upon the hills and valleys of our island home.

From the beginning of this age, antichrists have been rising up one after the other, each manifesting a maturer form of wickedness. And in each successive age the prophetic word spoke aloud, and warned the Church against the *existing* form of antichristian evil as that against which she was called on especially to wrestle and protest. Let us not despise the warning, nor postpone it to a future generation as a matter with which we personally have nought to do. For Satan is working unceasingly on our right hand and



on our left, putting forth every effort to build up and complete his mighty fabric of evil. The work is proceeding with most appalling swiftness. The builders of this temple, of which he is the architect, are energetic and full of hope. They compass sea and land in their ambitious projects; for nothing, save the worship of the world, will content their master. He has from the beginning been seeking divine homage; he has been receiving it, surreptitiously, by means of every antichrist that has arisen; and he hopes to receive it yet more openly and fully ere he is cast out of the earth for ever.

The connexion of Satan with this earth is full of mystery. It seems strange that he should fill its atmosphere and occupy its soil. It is somewhat unaccountable that he should put forth such unceasing efforts to obtain dominion in it. It is as if it had been the sphere originally intended for him; of which he had been dispossessed on account of his rebellion; in which Adam had been placed by God in his stead; and around which, therefore, Satan still lingers, like a dethroned monarch, aiming at its recovery to his allegiance, and stirring up insurrection in every region, in his efforts to replace himself upon its throne. How he has laboured for six thousand years to secure its fealty to himself, and to obtain, even upon its fallen soil, a place of abode, instead of that hell which is prepared for him and for his angels! How he shrinks from his final durance in the lake of fire, imploring not to be sent into the abyss, (Luke viii. 31,) nor to be tor-



mented before the time! If he can but gain footing here, he is willing to be unseen; he will consent to reign by another; he will be satisfied that a man should be his vicegerent. Nay, perhaps, this is his true aim. His object is to rival and to mock Jehovah, whose declared purpose from the beginning has been to rule the earth by man. Ere long, his dark device will too awfully prevail. He will succeed in maturing Antichrist as his vicegerent, his truest image and representative, impregnated with his own God-hating spirit, and eager to execute to the uttermost his God-defying designs. All the world shall wonder after him. All nations shall receive his mark on their foreheads and on their hands, in scornful mimicry of the saints who have their Father's name written in their foreheads. But just when his triumph seems consummated, and his representative is seated on the throne, with his myriad retinue of evil, shall the world's true King appear; and, casting the usurper, with all his hosts, into that dwelling of fire out of which they have striven so desperately to keep themselves, shall take the kingdom, and, with His holy ones, reign in peace over a delivered earth wherein dwelleth righteousness.

But, up to the moment when Christ appears, Satan, in the person of Antichrist, prevails and prospers. The whole period of Christ's absence from the earth is marked by the presence and prevalence of that adversary who is seeking to imitate and supplant Him. Age after age the apostasy ripens and spreads abroad

its branches, offering false shelter to the inhabitants of earth in mockery of the Plant of Renown, under whose shadow the nations are yet to rejoice. But in a moment the axe is lifted up against the tree; it is cut down and cast into the fire. It is not doomed to wither slowly down, leaf by leaf, till branch and stem are gone. Its end is swift destruction by the stroke of the Husbandman, while it is yet in its greenness and prime.

And then, what a change to this weary earth which has so long been groaning! What deliverance and joy! Christ upon the throne, Antichrist in the abyss, and Satan bound in chains! The saints exalted and glorified, the wicked trodden down and put to shame! The curse removed, Paradise restored, Israel gathered, the Gentiles converted, creation blessed, and Jehovah, in the person of Immanuel, taking up His everlasting abode with the children of men.\*

\* With reference to the above view of a *personal* Antichrist, I may quote Dr Urwick, a well-known *Anti-Millennarian*. The idea of *personality* in Antichrist has generally been condemned as one of the dreams of patristic or of modern Chiliasm. Let Dr U. be heard on this point:—"The statements in the Second Epistle to the Thessalonians, with regard to the 'mystery of iniquity,' the 'man of sin,' the 'lawless one,'—though they have had a fulfilment in the Papacy,—will have a more precise and appalling fulfilment. I confess that the style of expression seems to favour the idea of some *one person*, rather than a succession of persons."—On the Second Advent, pp. 222-225. Both Augustine and Jerome, who were strenuous *Anti-Chiliasts*, held the doctrine of a personal Antichrist. No one, for instance, can read the commentary of the former upon the 9th Psalm without observing this. And as for the latter, he introduces the idea in numerous places both of his Epistles and

Commentaries. He even goes the length of telling us that Antichrist is to be a Jew, (vol. iv. 523,) that he is to be hailed by the Jews as Messiah, (v. 131,) and that he is to perish on the Mount of Olives, *qui in Monte Oliveti consumendus sit*, (iv. 93.) He gets the last of these ideas out of Isaiah xxv. 6, 7, and Dan xi. 45. I may notice, in passing, that both of these fathers, though post-millennialists, frequently allude to the destruction of Antichrist by *the* second advent of the Lord. They do not attempt to explain away 2 Thess ii. 8.—If, then, the doctrine of a personal Antichrist be an unscriptural fancy, let both Millennarians and Anti-Millennarians bear the blame of holding it. I suspect, however, that the question is very much one of words. Both parties hold that there will be a personal head of the Antichristian body; only the one lays greater stress upon the head than upon the body, while the other does the opposite.

## CHAPTER XV.

### THE SIGNS.

THE NIGHT COMETH! Nor does it seem far off. It never appeared so nigh. The shadows are lengthening out, and falling with ominous gloom upon the valleys of earth. The dimness of twilight is beginning to make itself felt. It is settling down drearily upon our cities, and on our solitudes; upon the towers of our strength and the palaces of our pomp: nor can the noisy rush of eager multitudes, hurrying to and fro for gain or pleasure, wholly stifle the utterance of fear and awe. Men cannot help foreboding evil, for who can tell them what may be in the womb of darkness! The night-birds are already on the wing, flitting around us, and reminding us of the descending night.

Yet it is written also, "The day is at hand!" The night, though dark, is brief, and is soon succeeded by a glorious day. But still of that day the night is the forerunner. And this world's night is surely near. Else, why so many indications of closing day?

But has it not been always thus? Have not other ages as well as the present been equally crowded with signs of trouble? Have not certain men always loved to be prophets of evil, and to interpret gloomily the

events of their day? Is there not among many a morbid and unhealthy love of the dark and the ominous?

Be it so. It will not, however, be denied that the time must come when the crisis will arrive; and that before its arrival, it will give notice of its approach, by casting its shadows before. If such a crisis remains yet to be realised, then some age or other must be its precursor,—must lie next the precipice, and see with its own eyes the gulf below. It is right, no doubt, that we should be cautious, not misdating events nor miscalculating times, nor misjudging signs; but it is far safer to take swift alarm at what seem like tokens of evil, even though the alarm should prove false, than with incredulous, it may be derisive, scepticism, to reject every sign, and refuse to be forewarned. It is bad, certainly, to be taking needless alarm; but it is incredibly worse to deny that we ought to take alarm at all, as if the day of the Lord would never really come, but was a mere empty name, hung over us for terror, age after age, as a check upon the world and a stimulus to the Church. If, then, that day be a certainty, a reality, who will affirm that, when about to arrive, it will not foreshew itself? Surely a dislike to give heed to the forebodings of judgment, must arise from a dislike to entertain even the thought of that crisis. We will not see in the events of the day, premonitory shocks of the last earthquake, because we would fain discredit or postpone that day of calamity and terror.

This is not wisdom. Neither is it magnanimity. It is folly; it is littleness of soul. It is a reckless resolution to blind ourselves to the evil as long as possible, and then to brave it, as best we may, when it does burst upon us. Or, there may be the secret thought beneath, "What if it should never come at all? What if we have coloured the future with the gloom of our own fancies? What if the world is destined to pass through no such hurricane? What if we are to flow gently on into a fairer region, and a holier era, as winter dissolves itself softly into spring, or as spring expands itself into the brilliance of summer? At least the evil will not come in our day; we need not, then, vainly distract and alarm ourselves before the time."

But how have we discovered that the Lord will not come in our day? How have we ascertained that these signs, on which so many eyes are fixed, are delusive? Has God revealed it to us? Or, are we but guessing? Are we announcing as certain what we merely *wish* to be true? Why should it not come in our time? If it is to come in some age of the world, why not in ours? Who are we that we should affirm concerning our age, that no evil shall come nigh it? Is there a spell upon our generation, that the evil cannot touch it, but must be charmed onward to another? Has the enlightenment of the day reared such an embankment round it that no flood can assail or overflow it? This, surely, is the security of fatalism. It is the dream of unbelief, or the opiate of worldliness, that is resolved to

sleep on, unawakened by the unwelcome sound of threatening danger. If it be foolish to be always foreboding evil, it is worse than foolish to be recklessly closing the eye against the tokens of it, however numerous they may crowd upon us.

It may be said that these forebodings have so often been shamed and discredited, that we are justified in giving no heed to them. In every age some have taken the alarm, and have been the prophets of evil that has never arrived. I do not deny this; neither do I wish to hide it. But what of this? Were they not wise men who took the earliest alarm, even though their fears were not realised? They read evil in the signs of the times, and they gave utterance to the feelings of their hearts, that their fellow-men might be aroused. This was not folly, neither was it weakness. It was true wisdom. They painted, perhaps, the signs darker than they really were. They drew more out of them than they were intended to prognosticate. And so, what was dreaded did not come to pass. Yet who will say that they were not truly wise, even though their alarm was premature,—far wiser than those who read nothing in those signs at all? Such men have often been derided as gloomy enthusiasts, who sought to cloud the mirth of a happy world, and whose failure was the meet reward for their presumptuous folly. Yet folly was not with them. They might be sad and solemn, but they were not men of gloom or sternness. They had hearts as warm and true as ever throbbed within a human breast. It was not misanthropy; it was love



—love to a heedless world rushing on to judgment unprepared, that drew forth their deep and awful utterances. It was rejected warnings that made them sad, and fain to hide their thoughts within their bosoms, if love would have allowed it, if yearnings over dying multitudes had not constrained them to speak.

Notwithstanding, then, all the objections that are urged against interpreting the signs of the times, I shall, however briefly and imperfectly, make the attempt. Our Lord reproved the Pharisees for *not* doing this ; and, having left us so many signs of His coming, will He hold us guiltless if we refuse to consider these, and prepare for His arrival? Those that object to our doing this, would not find fault with us if we would only so interpret the signs as to throw the Advent into the distance ; that is to say, they admit the propriety of interpreting providential occurrences in some way or other ; they cannot, therefore, consistently censure us for *attempting* the interpretation ; they can only maintain that our interpretation is faulty and unproved.

The signs which have been given us, both by the Lord and His apostles, are as notable as they are numerous. And it is very evident that those have been selected which were the most expressive and least ambiguous. They are chosen as being the most prominent and explicit that could be given. It cannot be thought that the least striking have been announced, and the most striking concealed. If so, then is it not

very remarkable that the Millennium is never mentioned as a sign at all? Had this been to take place before the Advent, how has it never been alluded to as one of the signs? It would have been by far the most distinct and visible. No one could overlook or mistake it. Yet nowhere, by prophets or apostles, or by the Lord himself, is it noted as a sign. How can this be accounted for, save upon the ground that it was to take place *after*, not *before* the Advent? If this be admitted, all is plain; if it be denied, then let those who deny it account for the fact, that among the many signs of the coming the Millennium is never mentioned as one. *Why* the most palpable of them all should be omitted, seems to me to require an explanation. On the post-millennial system, the omission seems to me inexplicable; for thus our Lord would be made to profess to tell us the signs of His appearing, and yet to conceal the most notable of them all. But this is not all. The signs which are given are inconsistent with the idea of a Millennium before the coming. It is not merely that a certain event is not mentioned, but that those events which are mentioned preclude the possibility of such an event lying concealed among them. Who that reads the Lord's prophecy, which begins with the destruction of Jerusalem, and ends with His appearing in the clouds of heaven, does not feel that the whole drift of it was to shew the Church that she was to expect sorrow, not joy, tribulation, not triumph, up till the time when He should return? These signs were the successive crests of the billows

on which she was to be tossed, till He, with His own voice and presence, should rebuke the tempest and calm the ocean. The simple *omission*, then, of the Millennium as a sign, is a fact on which we ought to lay much stress; but the omission of it, in circumstances which preclude the possibility of its being a thing reserved or merely unspoken, furnishes a strong argument in favour of a pre-millennial Advent.

But without further adverting to this point, let me now note some of the signs which in the present day seem most remarkable as forerunners of the Lord's appearing. And though of some of these it might be said that they have been found in former days, yet others of them, as we shall see, are peculiar to our own :—

1. *The Maturity of the Papal Antichrist*.—Popery itself is no new thing in the earth, so that its mere existence is no peculiar sign of the last days. But its progress and prevalence are new. There is a maturity about it which in other ages it could not claim. It is rising in stature and hastening to its consummation. With stealthy foot she has been advancing step by step, till now she walks abroad at noonday with the sound of the trumpet, lifting up her head in bold defiance, and exulting in the consciousness of recovered mastery. Her hand, like Amalek's, is "upon the throne of the Lord;" and she acts and speaks as if in nothing she would be restrained of all that she has imagined to do.

2. *The Diffusion of Infidelity*.—This at least is

new. Our fathers knew comparatively little of this, and our fathers' fathers almost nothing. An infidel was rare indeed in their day; a man wondered at and shunned. Towards the close of the last century, infidelity burst forth in France, and partially extended itself elsewhere. Of late years it has developed itself with prodigious swiftness, and assumed a bold and lofty attitude of assault. Its extent is incredible. The masses are thoroughly leavened with it. It has insinuated itself everywhere, and is eating out the very heart of everything like deep principle among men. It has corroded the cement by which society clings together, so that nations and communities are now like walls or towers without mortar, ready to fall to pieces of themselves, or be levelled by the first blast. Its ferocity is alarming; its activity unceasing. Much of it is undisguised and confessed, but very much of it is still secret and unavowed. It taints the air; it blights life; it ossifies conscience; under it, all good things wither. It is the worm at the root of all that is noble and excellent in these last days. Hence the *hollow* condition of things amongst us; the chill that is upon life's warm fellowships and offices of love. Conscience is palsied; the *heart* of the people is gone. Social, political, kindred ties are wormeaten, and ready to break asunder. The erect bearing and manly vigour which religion imparts is no longer visible. Superstition has come to the rescue, and is trying to supply its place. But in vain. Expediency rules. Large masses of the people are either openly or secretly infidel, if

not atheistical. God is not acknowledged. His yoke seems to gall men's shoulders. The nations are ready to cast it off. And what hope is there, what token, that this is to end before the Lord return to end it?

3. *The Increase of Immorality.*—Like a flood it is swelling and widening in its course. It is without shame, and without fear. Truth is fast going out of human language; confidence between man and man is leaving human life; friendships are bare and empty, little more than selfish conveniences; even oaths are frail,—in most cases forms, in many, mockeries—

“And, clad like honesties, the falsehoods move  
Along the world.”

CONSCIENCE is gone: tenderness of spirit is known only in our works of fiction; noble-mindedness is to be found only on the monuments of the dead. The heart of the nation, nay, of the world, has been tampered with and vitiated, till it is ready for almost any excess of evil: the life-blood is tainted, and hence the loathsome sores that are breaking forth, betokening the depth and virulence of the taint—“the ineradicable taint of sin.” Crimes that our fathers knew not of are common among the nations. Licentiousness riots fearfully, perpetrating deeds without a name, so that “it is a shame even to speak of those things that are done of them in secret.” Drunkenness staggers along every street. Blasphemy pours itself forth, till we shudder, and close the ear against its horrid sounds. Murder has broken loose, and every day our newspapers are telling some horrid tale of bloodshed; man slaying his

fellow-man, in fiendish hatred, or more fiendish love of gain ; none spared ; the parent butchering his children, the child his parent, the husband the wife, the wife the husband : no sanctity of relationship is any safeguard from the poison, or the bullet, or the knife, or the more brutal hammer. Oh, what a cry is going up to heaven from this land of ours ; the cry of innocent blood, blood which a righteous God will yet avenge ! But the picture of our spreading immorality is one not easily drawn, save by the record of *facts*,—facts which one man scarcely ventures to whisper to another, too awful to be laid bare before the public eye. It calls for a prophet's eye to see it, a prophet's pen to record it, and a prophet's soul to weep over it “in secret places” before the Lord. Men are truly “lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady, high-minded, lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God.” All this is to come to pass in the last days, and to wax worse and worse till the Lord come.

4. *The Prevalence of Superficiality and Formalism in Religion.*—Form without power, a body without a soul, religion without vitality ; these are among the signs of the last days. The shew of piety is widespread, but the thing itself occupies a narrow circle. There is much profession, but profession lies on the surface, and underneath all may be worldliness. Depth



and solidity are wanting ; the aspect of religion is unhealthy ; the fresh hue of primitive times is departed ; the intense vitality which of right belongs to it, is dried up ; so that, instead of its being the living source of motion to the world without, controlling, or counter-acting, or impelling its currents, it lies inert and passive, at the mercy of every outward movement. It is a worldly, self-pleasing religion, adopted for fashion's sake, and used according to convenience. We look in vain for the profound sense of sin, the simple faith which the Church once manifested, the solemn, un-earthly walk which she once pursued. We are mere imitators of godliness ; we " steal our words one from another." Hence we are driven about with every wind of doctrine, having no stability, no anchorage, save that which the inertness of death affords.

Satan has now transformed himself into an angel of light, and under this fair disguise he is working with marvellous success. He is teaching us to build the tombs of our fathers, that we may rest content with the mere approbation of their principles without any imitation of their practice. He leads some astray into fatal error, under the pretext of candour and love of truth ; others he saturates with the orthodoxy of the head, that they may become indifferent to the state of their heart before God. Some he persuades to deny the Bible ; to others he lauds it, that he may make it a substitute for the God of the Bible. He cries up faith, that he may set it as a substitute for the object of faith. With some he denies the possibility of assur-



ance, that he may keep them from peace with God ; with others he maintains the necessity of it, only in order that he may lead them to make a god of it, and substitute their being sure of salvation for believing in the Saviour. He cries down the Arminianism of making works our Saviour, that he may lead us into the more subtle delusion of making a Saviour of our faith. He allows us a wide range of religious feeling and sentiment, if he can only succeed in making them a substitute for God. He hinders not our being serious, earnest, solemn, if he can thereby feed the cravings of a restless, empty soul with something which may prevent us from seeking the bread of life. He permits us to denounce the world's vanity and hollow pleasures ; to be weary of its unsatisfying round of folly, that he may delude us into the idea that this dissatisfaction with the world is a proof that we are religious, and thereby cause us to sit down contented, when yet a great way off from our Father's house. He tolerates the circulation of useful, nay, of religious knowledge, that we may rest satisfied with something short of the fulness of God himself. He may countenance, too, the routine of religious societies or Church courts, and the false excitement of crowded assemblies, eloquent speeches, glowing reports, that he may administer thereby that opiate to the soul by which it may be kept in a delusive day-dream, which seems so like "the sober certainty of waking bliss," that we cannot think of breaking the luxury of the pleasant spell. He inculcates the necessity of providing for our children

what is called a liberal education, that he may make that a substitute for a father's blessing and a mother's prayers. He urges the obligation of Christian liberality, the necessity of large funds, that he may bring men to rest religious enterprise upon funds, not upon faith,—upon prudence, not on prayer.

These outward things may be in themselves right and good, but what are they without the indwelling Spirit? What is truth without the True One? What is the perfection of Church order without the vital power from above? The body is there, but the living spirit has fled; the altar and the sacrifice are there, but the fire from heaven descends not; the temple is perfect, and the worshippers are thronging its courts, but the glory is departed; Jehovah has left His shrine!

5. *The Strange and Incongruous Mixture of Opinions that Prevails.*—Men's imaginations seem to be let loose in every direction in inventing these; science, philosophy, literature, theology, are all shooting forth a rank luxuriance of verdure, which is even already producing a harvest of incongruous opinions. The crudities that are often issuing forth under sanction of these venerable names are such as to make one at times tremble lest truth itself should be drifting from her anchorage. These are the "unclean spirits, like frogs, which proceed out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet." They are well said to be "like frogs;" in themselves croaking, contemptible agencies, yet insinuating themselves everywhere, and defiling all places,

even the most sacred, with their loathsomeness, and annoying the general ear with their incessant, unmeaning noise. These are they whom Satan is now sending forth, in this the cloudy dusk of the world's declining day, to form a triple alliance between powers hitherto at war with each other, animating them by one spirit to fight against the Lord and His anointed. Of these are the thousand organs of the infidel press, sending abroad its croaking progeny and leavening the nations with the subtle poison of its atheistical politics, and the damnable delusions of its pantheistical theology: from the contamination of whose foul principles (as in Egypt during the plague of frogs) none but God's chosen Israel shall be exempt; for "they shall deceive, if it were possible, the very elect." And when is it that these spirits of devils "go forth to the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of the great day of God Almighty?" It is just before the Advent. They have been going forth already, and are still going forth: and they shall continue their horrid work of gathering the nations into their great slaughter-house, till the Lord come; for it is added immediately, "Behold, I come as a thief; blessed is he that watcheth and keepeth his garments." (Rev. xvi. 15.)

6. *Dissociality*.—The coherence of the whole social system is very precarious. Nay, the coherence of its minute component parts, its communities, its neighbourhoods, its families, is very slight indeed; if, indeed, it may not be said to be already loosed and dissevered.

It is as if our very atmosphere possessed a decomposing power. The cement of society has at length given way to the corrosive influence of wickedness. Man's native selfishness is in the ascendant. It has burst over its restraints, and is now triumphing. Melancholy triumph for the world! for with it all that is fair and goodly, all that is large-hearted and loving, all that binds us to each other in charity and brotherhood, all that is generous and disinterested, must ere long utterly decay. The world is at length breaking up. Like a stranded vessel over which sea after sea has been driving, it can no longer hold together. Its timbers are parting, and it will soon be a total wreck. God meant the human family to be but one household, knit together in love and brotherhood as well as blood. There has been little enough of this true oneness hitherto; but still there has been some. But now it is disappearing. The family, instead of being like a compact rock, close-knit in all its parts, is fast becoming a mere mound of sand, whose particles have no cohesion, no union, save that of casual, temporary nearness, and whose mass the first springtide will level and sweep away. *Self* is now in full maturity and action. Suspicion of each other is one of the rules of life. It is not possible that the social fabric can cling long together. And who shall *recement* it? Who shall restore the lost unity, and reproduce the vanished confidence? He who comes to make all things new. Things have been allowed to fall into decay, and to continue to crumble down, atom by atom, till He should

come, that His should be the glory of remodelling and reconstructing the fallen fabric; and that His might be through eternity the praise, not only of bringing a redeemed Church through death to resurrection-life, and perfection, but of bringing creation through decay and ruin to restitution-life, stability, and comeliness.

7. *Religious Deceivers*.—The extent to which these are flourishing in our day is much overlooked. We have grown so familiar with strange opinions that we have almost ceased to notice them. Yet in all countries and in all Churches these are springing up. Besides the great leaders of superstition in our day, Romanists, Jesuits, and Tractarians, there are the Unitarians, the Mormons, the Latter-Day Saints, the Swedenborgians, and such like, who are all saying, “Lo, here is Christ!” or, “Lo, there!” Incredible and absurd as these systems are, they are believed in by thousands, who seem to be given over “to strong delusion that they should believe a lie.” There are many other sects of which we have only casual notices sometimes in the public journals. And then, in addition to these, there are sad heresies springing up around us in various forms, and indicating a restless, feverish state of mind, which must, ere long, issue in something more hideous and fatal. On the one hand, we have tradition subverting revelation, and making itself the standard of religious truth; on the other, we have reason doing precisely the same thing, and subjecting every doctrine to the interrogation, Is it reasonable? Some deny the Godhead of the Son, because it seems

*unreasonable*. Others deny the eternity of punishment, because it is *unreasonable*. Others deny the materiality of hell, because it is *unreasonable*. Others make away with election, because it is *unreasonable*. Thus reason, which is *the tradition of the present*, as thoroughly and as profanely sets aside Scripture as does the authority of the fathers, which is *the tradition of the past*. And then there are proud attempts to soar above the morality of the Bible, not only the morality of the Old Testament, but also of the New. As Popery established a pretended *purity* far above that which the Bible commanded, "forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats;" so modern reason is engaged in devising and promulgating a new *morality*, professing a far nobler standard than that which God has enjoined. How many are almost ready to condemn the Bible, because it has not condemned *war* as a sin, and who, in their Peace Societies, are assuming a position and inculcating principles which the Bible never taught them! How many are equally ready to denounce the Bible, because it contains no denunciations against slavery; but calmly addresses both the master and the slave, saying, "Whatsoever good thing a man doeth, the same shall he receive of the Lord, whether he be bond or free!" How many almost scoff at the Bible, because it inculcates no total-abstinence morality, but simply urges temperance as the Christian's duty! How many look with wonder or horror upon the cruelty of Scripture morality in countenancing, nay, commanding, the



taking of life for life! How many look down contemptuously upon the weekly restraint of a Sabbath, proudly giving as their reason that *they* consider that every day should be dedicated to God! In what is all this to end? Doubtless in something very disastrous. Man's morality must take the place of God's; nay, God himself be superseded in the government of His own world. Scripture must soon give way entirely before men who profess to have got up to a higher level, and attained a purer morality; a morality which antiquates and supersedes all that God has revealed. The world is not yet prepared for the full proclamation of the principles thus given forth in the germ. But it may soon be so. The flood-gates cannot much longer resist the pressure; and what a deluge will that be which shall then issue forth upon the world! Is it not, then, by these things that "we know that it is the last time," and that "the end of all things is at hand?"

8. *Wars and rumours of wars, earthquakes, pestilences, and famines in divers places.*—I need not enter minutely into the proof of the existence of these. The news of every week may bear witness to it. For a while, it seemed almost as if the world were at rest, as if its storms had spent themselves. But now all seems changed. Every day brings new indications of disquietude and convulsion. In every region,—continent or island, wilderness or fruitful plain,—there are wars and rumours of wars, famines, pestilences, earthquakes. Few nations seem willing to draw the sword, yet every



nation has her hand upon the hilt; with some it is already gleaming in the air, and with others it is reddened with blood. Over the whole earth is heard "the long, low, distant murmur of dread sound." And is this not the prelude to the last universal war? Is it not a sign of the near approach of Him who, when earth's madness and ambition are at their height,—when the summoned nations are gathered at Armageddon, girt for battle and slaughter, Himself appears for their discomfiture and ruin? Then, but not till then, wars shall cease, and the weapons of war perish. Then the true Solomon shall begin his reign, hushing the tumults of the nations, and introducing the long-expected Sabbath of this weary "work-day world."

9. *The restlessness of the world.*—This sign is in part connected with the preceding, yet may be viewed separately. The state of the world is at present very ominous. "Looking after the things that are coming on the earth" is God's picture of the state of men as the crisis draws on. This certainly seems our attitude at this moment. The earth and the things that are coming on it attract the attention of all. There is something in the state of the world so unsettled, so pregnant with uncertain evil, that every eye is moving to and fro in expectation of strange issues, and as if to catch the first sign of their approach. The form and colour of the clouds forebode speedy change, and threaten tempest to the nations. The time for listlessness and apathy is gone. Some thirty years ago, when the skies were bright, and men could promise them-

selves days of sunshine, it was safe enough to fold the hands and take our ease. But all this is over. No doubt, after the excitement through which we have passed, men would prefer repose. But the onward swell of the waters stays not for an hour. There is among the nations a spirit of restlessness, anarchy, and insubordination; a passionate love of change, a headlong rush to overturn every established system, too furious and united to be ultimately withstood. Many call it but a passing tumult, the frenzy of an hour; but they who understand it know how deep is the spring out of which it flows. The storm, long gathering, but resisted and repressed by the barriers which ancient wisdom had erected for the stability of kingdoms, is concentrating and condensing its strength in these venerable recesses, which may for a while refuse to yield to the explosive force, but which, overstrained at length, give way to the accumulated pressure; the kingdoms of the earth are shivered; throne and temple are overturned; wall and fortress are laid in ruins. Such is the night which is to precede the long-looked-for day,—when not only Israel but the whole earth shall arise and put on the garments of beauty, fit and meet for the presence of their glorious King.

10. *Missions*.—No age since that of the apostles has witnessed such wide-spread exertions in behalf of the Jewish and Gentile nations as our own. This, certainly, is a sign peculiar to the present century. I do not defend all that has been done by Missionary and Bible Societies; but still I would point to the fact of

hundreds of missionaries going forth to every region of our globe, millions of Bibles circulated,—almost every nation having the Scriptures in their own language,—and, pointing to these simple but magnificent facts, I ask, is there not in these a most palpable fulfilment of the words of the Lord, “This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached to all nations for a witness, and then shall the end come?” In our day we have the universal preaching of the gospel. The result, however, is not the conversion of the world, but the gathering out of the election. And then “the end” comes! It is not said, and then the Millennium comes. But *the end*—the end of the age, the coming of the Son of Man. This sign seems also that referred to in Revelation, (xiv. 6,) “I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel, to preach unto them that dwell on the earth.” How palpable the sign! It will, I doubt not, become more and more visible,—but still, there it is already before us,—a sign which foretells a coming Lord, and most distinctly intimates the impossibility of a Millennium before His advent.

11. *Israel*.—This long-forgotten nation is now coming into remembrance. The nations of the earth are beginning to observe this strange people, “terrible from the beginning hitherto.” The eyes both of the world and of the Church are far more intently directed towards them than they have been since the day that their city perished, and they were led captive into the land of the stranger. It is curious to observe how

both travellers and missionaries are continually making new discoveries with regard to Israel, stumbling upon some new fragment of their lost tribes. God seems to be breaking up inaccessible territories, in order to bring to view the hiding-places of His ancient people, and to open their prison doors. A goodly number are now also turning their eyes to the cross. The "remnant according to the election of grace" is visibly coming in. The interest taken in the Jews everywhere is very striking. God is once more placing them before the eyes of the world, as those through whom He has blessed the world in times past, and through whom He means to bless it again. But when is this? Not till "the Redeemer shall come to Zion, and turn away ungodliness from Jacob." Not till "they shall look on Him whom they have pierced, and mourn." The full salvation of Israel is reserved for the coming of their Messiah. Then, but not till then, shall "Israel blossom and bud, and fill the face of the world with fruit."

12. *Disbelief of the approaching Advent even in the Church.*—It is no marvel that the world should either deride or deny that event. And it is of the world's mocking that Peter speaks when he says, "There shall come in the last days scoffers, saying, Where is the promise of his coming?" But the Church also loses sight of that day; nay, refuses to credit the news of its approach. She says, "My Lord delayeth his coming." She slumbers and sleeps. And it is just when she is speaking thus, and thus slumbering; it is in an

hour when she thinks not, that He arrives. It is often said, Surely, if the time were just at hand, more of God's people would believe it. But it is when many of them are not believing it, and counting on delay, that the Bridegroom comes.

13. *Efforts at self-regeneration.*—I do not say this of the Church, though there are some tokens of it even in her. But I speak of the world. Man seems now to be putting forth every effort to regenerate himself without God. Amid the achievements of science and of art, he has lost sight of his own helplessness and dependence on Him who created him. He thinks to be a God to himself. It is as if, before God's glorious purpose of restitution is brought to pass, man is to be allowed to do his utmost for the renewal of himself and of the world. He is to be put to the proof. He is to be permitted to boast himself for a little, and congratulate himself upon the triumph before him. Hence the vain-glorious speeches we so often hear, of man's powers and man's prospects. Political reforms are spoken of as the regeneration of the world. One party most loudly maintains that the separation of Church and State is to usher in the Millennium; another as boldly affirms that it is the union of these that is to accomplish this. Education, science, literature, philosophy, are called the world's regenerators, and no limits are assigned to the blessings which these are to confer upon the world. It is curious, also, to observe, within these ten years past, how eagerly science has been putting forth all its energies in

pursuit of discoveries that shall restore fruitfulness to the soil. Agricultural chemistry has shot up into a separate study. As if unconsciously prescient of the earth's deliverance from the curse of barrenness, men are labouring to do all that science can, to hasten on that day of restitution. These efforts at self-regeneration must prove abortive; for man cannot undo either his sin or its consequences. They may succeed to a certain extent; but only to prove how little they can effect. They are, however, sure signs of a coming deliverance. For when man's endeavours have proved fruitless, both in reference to himself and the soil which he tills, God shall at length interpose, and accomplish the work of renovation by the word of His power.

14. *The spread of knowledge.*—Many are running to and fro, and knowledge is increasing. Nor is it knowledge of one kind, but of every kind, secular and sacred. It is, however, for the former that this age is specially distinguished. And Satan is putting forth his utmost resources of power and craft thus to lead men captive at his will. "The prince of all knowledge, (as one wrote twenty years ago,) where God is not known; of all power, where God is not acknowledged; the bright archangel of the natural man, revealing himself in his angelic glories of natural knowledge, natural beauty, natural wisdom, and natural humanity." Thus does he play his part in this last age! Under these radiant disguises, he is bewildering the eyes of men, and persuading them that



this diffusion of knowledge is the breaking of the millennial dawn. So specious are his counterfeits, that it is hard to separate the real from the false, the precious from the vile ; for when he thus comes forth as an angel of light, clothed in every perfection that the natural heart loves, and the carnal eye admires, who shall penetrate the deception and escape the snare, save those who “ know all things,” by reason of “ the unction from the Holy One ? ” Most truly (as one has remarked) has the present state of the world been described by one of the world’s own poets, when picturing the gay glitter of an evening assembly, over which was thrown

“ A dazzling mass of artificial light,  
Which shew’d all things, but nothing as they were.”

So it is now upon the earth, among the heedless multitudes of the children of men. It is the world’s midnight. They are eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage. Literature, science, art, philosophy, are all their own ! Yet there is an artificial colouring, an unreal brightness, over all. There is music, but it is of the syren kind ; not the deep melody of old ancestral song. There is eloquence, too, but it is “ the words of man’s wisdom,” not that which speaks for God and “ winneth souls.” There is fervour, too, but it is the warmth of wild excitement, born in novelty and nursed by perpetual change. There is high thought, too, but it is often of the unhealthful cast, wrought off at the midnight lamp ; not the deep musings begot



in fellowship with God, and ceaseless converse with that Word which maketh wise the simple.

Along with all this, there is a proud air of independence, like that which said, "Our lips are our own; who is Lord over us?" There is a reckless determination to hold what opinions men please, unchecked and unproved. And, then, in connexion with this, many are loud in maintaining, on the one hand, the harmlessness of error, and on the other, the omnipotence of truth. No doubt, upon unfallen beings, error must fall innocuous, and truth prove itself resistless. But in this fallen world, error cannot be so innocent, nor truth so omnipotent, as some suppose. Were this the native country of truth; were the atmosphere of this world its native air, we might hope to see it spring up in rich and spontaneous luxuriance. But so long as Satan is the god of this world—"the prince of the power of the air," truth must ever be an alien to the soil. "It bears a bright golden flower, but not in this clime." The sentiment I allude to is one of Satan's most subtle sophistries, by means of which he hopes to succeed in confounding truth and error. "*Magna est veritas et prævalebit*," is the adage of antiquity. I believe it. I know that there is in reserve for truth a glorious triumph in the ages to come, even upon this dark earth; but this shall not be by its own might, but by the Spirit of the Lord. It is not science and philosophy that are to regenerate the world. They are evidences that the predicted time is come when "many shall run to and fro, and knowledge

shall be increased." But the "march of intellect" is not the triumph of truth. They are signs of promised day,—

"last in the train of night,  
If better they belong not to the dawn ;"

but they are neither the star of morning nor the sun of righteousness. They shall grace the triumph of truth, but not as confederate allies, to whom in part belongs the glory of the victory, but only as captives bound to its chariot-wheels. Truth *shall* prevail! But not till HE who is TRUTH shall come to lead it on to victory. Then its present obscurity will only enhance its future exaltation. The darkness, which now wraps it, conceals, but cannot mar it; and, like the face of heaven when the clouds pass off, which hide, but soil not its spotless azure, it shall emerge unstained.

These are a few of the many "signs of the times." Of some of these it may be affirmed that they belong specially to our own day, not having been witnessed by any former age. Of others we may say, that, though seen in other ages, they have shone out far more fully and decidedly in our own. No previous age could point to signs so many and so vivid as ours can do; and it is this that renders our position so very solemn and responsible. No thoughtful mind will hastily reject them, even though not wholly satisfied; for even though they may appear defective, yet there is much about them that is not improbable; and what if, after

all, they should be true? The *facts* to which I have been adverting exist. It becomes us in good earnest to inquire, What do they mean, what do they indicate?

It was the aberrations of one of our exterior planets that gave the first notice to astronomers of the presence of another orb, outside our present planetary region ; so it is the strange aberrations, the irregular movements of things around us, that reveal to the well-taught eye of the Church the near approach of that Star which has been so long absent from our system. And as, when the suggestion was given forth to the students of science, many a telescope was forthwith pointed to the quarter where the predicted stranger was expected to present itself ; so when the signs of the times proclaim so audibly "The Lord is at hand," should not every eye be turning upwards to the heavens from which He is to descend in glory, and every heart throbbing at the thought that He shall so soon be here? How many astronomers are now reproaching themselves, because they were so slow to credit the calculations of science, and be the first to catch a glimpse of the expected planet. And how far more truly, more deeply bitter may be our reproaches hereafter, if we turn coldly away from the announcement, "Behold He cometh," and find ourselves shut out from the blessedness of the promise, "I will give him the Morning Star."

It is now more than three thousand years since God gave to His Church one of her gladdest, richest songs

by the mouth of Hannah, in the day when her tribulation was at an end, and the desire of her heart had been given. It is a song of vast prophetic fulness,—a song as marvellous in compass as it is magnificent in thought :—

“ He raiseth up the poor out of the dust,  
He lifteth the beggar from the dunghill,  
To set them among princes,  
And to make them inherit the throne of glory ;  
For the pillars of the earth are the Lord’s,  
And he hath set the world upon them.  
He will keep the feet of his saints,  
And the wicked shall be silent in darkness,  
For by strength shall no man prevail.  
The adversaries of the Lord shall be broken to pieces ;  
Out of heaven shall he thunder upon them.  
Jehovah shall judge the ends of the earth ;  
He shall give strength unto his King,  
And exalt the horn of his Anointed.”

All this, of course, was full of meaning, even in that early period in which it was uttered ; yet how dim that meaning must have been to those who saw these predicted events only afar off ! But, like all other prophetic songs, this has gathered fulness as it passed along the ages. Each age has imparted light to it, and dispersed shade after shade. Each generation of the Church has drawn out of it a wider and a profounder meaning. Till now, in this last age, we can take it up and sing it, line after line, with an understanding and an emphasis unknown in earlier days. For the time is at hand, and the projected shadows of the future are becoming every

day sharper in their outline, and more intelligible in their motions.

The day is at hand when the poor shall be raised out of the dust, set among princes, and made to inherit the throne of glory ; when the Lord shall establish the world upon its pillars, that it may not be moved for ever. *Now* He keepeth the feet of His saints, but *then* He shall break their enemies in pieces like a potter's vessel, sending forth His lightnings to scatter them and consign them to the blackness of darkness for ever. *Now* the wicked are exalted, but *then* Jehovah shall judge the ends of the earth, giving strength unto His own anointed King, crowning Him with the "many crowns," and investing Him with glory and dominion for ever. What a spectacle shall the new earth then present, when delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the sons of God !—Once more meet for God to look upon, and worthy to be the dwelling-place of His eternal Son ! Once more linked to heaven by the true ladder of which Jacob saw but the symbol ; angels of God ascending and descending, in blessed fellowship and ministries of love ! Once more fit to take rank in creation, not, as hitherto, an outcast planet doomed to darkness, but radiant all over with holy beauty, the seat of government and centre of influence to the unmeasured universe around.

And how soon shall present night be forgotten in the brightness of the endless day ! How soon shall the curse give place to the blessing, barrenness be

exchanged for fruitfulness, and all pollution be swept clean away! It is but "a little while" and all shall be well! Another night's tossing on the billows, and then the calm of the eternal morn! One more outburst of the "warring winds," and then all storms are hushed, and the long dissonances of time melt into the one harmony of creation's boundless song!

THE END.

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